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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

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Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 20 December 1995, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/58 H entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", in which it, inter alia, stressed the importance of the appointment of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and of the steps taken under the auspices of the Secretary-General to ensure the achievement of a coordinated mechanism for United Nations activities throughout the occupied territories; urged Member States and agencies of the United Nations system to extend, as rapidly and as generously as possible, economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people to assist in the development of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with emphasis on national execution and capacity-building and to do so in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization and through official Palestinian institutions; called upon the international donor community to expedite the delivery of pledged assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their urgent needs; and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly on the implementation of the resolution, containing: (a) an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people; and (b) an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them.

2. Terje Rød-Larsen continued his functions as United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories as outlined in the previous report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/50/286-E/1995/113). The present report covers the period from June 1995 through May 1996.

3. Throughout the period under review, the Special Coordinator focused his efforts on:

(a) Supporting ongoing and proposed activities of the over 20 United Nations agencies and programmes operational or seeking to become operational in the West Bank and Gaza Strip within the framework of the integrated and targeted programme adopted at the June 1995 United Nations inter-agency meeting convened by the Special Coordinator in Gaza;

(b) Strengthening the coordination structures on the ground linking the Palestinian Authority, the Government of Israel, the international donor community, and the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations, as well as the role of the United Nations within those structures;

(c) Working with all parties in the development effort, and in particular the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, to help maintain its momentum, especially during periods of crisis.

4. Following the June 1995 inter-agency meeting, sectoral strategies covering education, health, employment generation, infrastructure and housing, institution-building and the private sector were finalized. They articulated a coordinated, integrated and targeted approach to the main developmental priorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as identified by the Palestinian Authority. Each of the six strategies included proposals from United Nations agencies and programmes for specific technical and project assistance for implementation beginning in late 1995 and 1996. The total package of proposals

amounted to projects worth approximately $550 million. The proposed programme of assistance contained in the United Nations strategy papers was developed in coordination with the relevant sectoral ministries of the Palestinian Authority, as well as with the Palestinian Authority Ministry for Planning and International Cooperation. In addition, representatives from the Palestinian Authority, donor countries and the World Bank participated in the United Nations inter-agency meeting at which the strategy papers had been reviewed in draft form.

5. The United Nations proposed programme of assistance for 1996 was formally presented to the donor community by the Special Coordinator at the ministerial-level meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the main donor-led body overseeing the assistance effort, held on 28 September 1995. The meeting was convened on the occasion of the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in Washington, D.C. At the meeting, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee stressed the imperative to respond quickly to the major achievement in the political arena represented by the Interim Agreement by intensifying efforts in the economic arena. It was decided to hold a ministerial conference of donor countries as soon as possible, and that this conference would be preceded by a World Bank-led Consultative Group meeting to be convened on 18 and 19 October 1995 in Paris.

6. Continuing the close cooperation of the past year, the United Nations and the World Bank jointly prepared a policy document for consideration by donors at the October 1996 Consultative Group meeting. Entitled "Putting peace to work: priorities and strategies for the second phase of the development effort in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", the document was prepared in close coordination with the Palestinian Authority, in consultation with the Government of Israel and following discussions with key donors. For its part, the Palestinian Authority established a "core list" of technical and infrastructural assistance projects, drawing from proposed United Nations, World Bank and bilateral activities. The core list required approximately $550 million in donor funds, of which 27 projects valued at approximately $100 million were for implementation by agencies and programmes of the United Nations. The main elements of the joint United Nations/World Bank policy document were discussed during the Consultative Group meeting and were widely reflected in the Chair's summary.

7. The Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People was held on 9 January 1996 in Paris. Conference participants emphasized, inter alia, the importance of improving the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people through a comprehensive effort to create jobs, improve physical and social infrastructure and establish the basis for sustainable economic growth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In this connection, the Palestinian Authority's "core list" of development activities for 1996, as well as other activities proposed by the Palestinian Authority, the World Bank and the United Nations were considered by donors. At the Conference itself and over the following weeks, approximately $805 million was pledged by donors for investment projects and an additional $72.5 million was pledged towards the 1996 Palestinian Authority recurrent budget deficit projected at $75 million.

8. According to information provided by United Nations organizations to the Office of the Special Coordinator, agencies and programmes of the Organization

received approximately $105 million in donor funding between July 1995 and June 1996 for technical and infrastructural project assistance for the benefit of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Of the United Nations projects contained in the Palestinian Authority core list, 19 received approximately $59 million in donor funding. These figures do not include funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) regular programmes of education, health and relief and social services, which would amount to approximately $150 million for the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1996; nor do they reflect the decision of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to double the funding from its own "core resources" for the period 1996-1998, to a minimum of $8 million. By mid-1996, many donors had yet to commit their 1996 pledges to specific projects. It was therefore anticipated that further funding would be received by United Nations organizations during the second half of the year.

9. The development effort suffered a severe setback beginning on 25 February 1996 when a series of suicide terrorist attacks, which killed nearly 60 persons, prompted the Government of Israel to implement a series of countermeasures, including the closure of the occupied territories. The closure order prevented the movement of persons and goods into or out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For the Palestinian economy and for the fiscal position of the Palestinian Authority, the closure had devastating consequences. Domestic unemployment rose sharply as businesses were unable to maintain their access to external markets either for the purpose of importing or for exporting. In addition, the estimated 70,000 Palestinians who had worked in Israel during February 1996 were unable to enter Israel owing to the closure order. The decline in economic activity in the territories and of employment in Israel led to a sharp reduction in Palestinian Authority revenues. By mid-April 1996, with the closure still in place, the 1996 recurrent budget deficit was estimated to have increased by some $100 million above the $75 million projected in late 1995.

10. In response to the closure of the territories, the Special Coordinator proposed a framework for a plan aimed at an easing of the closure and the establishment of a donor-funded emergency employment creation programme. The United States announced on 28 March 1996 that the Palestinian Authority, the Government of Israel and the Government of Norway, representing the donor community, had agreed to the framework that had been put forward by the United Nations. Over the following weeks, steady increases were recorded in the movement of goods into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The overall volume of trade, however, remained below the pre-closure level. The number of Palestinian workers employed in Israel was approximately 10,000 at the end of May 1996.

11. The United Nations responded rapidly to the call of the Palestinian Authority for assistance in creating employment opportunities. With special earmarked contributions from several donor countries, both UNRWA and UNDP began implementation of projects in mid-March that were expected to provide up to 5,000 employment opportunities during 1996. The UNDP projects were implemented jointly with the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR).

12. From 15 to 17 April 1996, the Special Coordinator convened the third United Nations inter-agency meeting in Gaza. The main purpose of the meeting, which was attended by over 20 agencies and programmes of the Organization, was to establish priorities for the United Nations programmes of assistance during 1997. These priorities, accompanied by project proposals for addressing unmet needs, will be presented in the form of six documents covering education, health, employment generation, infrastructure and housing, institution-building and the private sector. United Nations organizations developed their proposed 1997 programmes in response to needs and priorities identified by the Palestinian Authority, whose sectoral ministries participated in the inter-agency meeting. Donors and World Bank officials also participated in the sectoral workshops of the meeting. The United Nations documents will be presented to donors at the next World Bank-led Consultative Group meeting, which is expected to take place during the second half of 1996.

II. ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE: ONGOING PROGRAMMES, UNMET NEEDS AND PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

A. United Nations assistance in education

1. Background

13. Education is the largest service sector run by the Palestinian Authority and caters to the social, educational and employment needs of more than 35 per cent of the population. The number of people employed or enrolled in the various educational institutions in the West Bank and Gaza, is estimated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to be 719,233. The Ministry was established in August 1994 and employs more than 22,000 people. The total estimated cost of the educational system is $180 million annually (excluding higher education). In total, $130 million is needed for salaries and $50 million for administration, including $5 million for textbooks.

14. In 1994/95, there were more than 1,474 schools in the West Bank and Gaza: 1,084 Palestinian Authority schools, 259 schools run by UNRWA and 131 private schools. There are 21 community colleges, of which 4 are run by UNRWA, and 8 universities. Pre-school education is sustained by the private sector and by non-governmental organizations, supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education does not provide financial support for non-formal education, but plans to supervise the quality of teachers and literacy programmes and support literacy centres and continuing education units.

15. In spite of the many problems facing the sector, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education made few administrative and educational changes during its first year of operation, in order to avoid unnecessary disruption. Steps were taken to unify the West Bank and Gaza Strip educational systems into a uniform curriculum. A major achievement was the organizing of the secondary school matriculation exam. Other achievements of the Ministry during its first year of operation, included constructing and rehabilitating schools, setting up the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre, printing textbooks for the 1995/96 school year, and introducing English into the fifth and sixth grades in the Gaza

Strip. The Ministry declared 1996 to be the "Year for Quality of Education", with the aim of raising teachers' standards.

2. Assistance provided

16. Within the United Nations system, UNRWA, UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have played an important role in assisting the education sector. Other United Nations agencies provide technical and financial assistance for training and rehabilitation.

17. UNDP has focused on improving infrastructural facilities through the construction and renovation of schools and classrooms and on increasing access for girls to educational opportunities. Based on the priorities of the Ministry of Education, UNDP launched several infrastructural projects in 1995 and 1996, including the rehabilitation of a school and cultural complex in the city of Jericho, 18 schools in rural West Bank communities and the premises of the Ministry of Education in Ramallah. Support was also provided for renovation works in 19 educational facilities in the Gaza Strip. Three youth centres were renovated and sports facilities provided in Jericho, Gaza and Rafah under an umbrella project jointly implemented by UNDP, UNICEF and UNRWA. In February 1996, UNDP launched a project aimed at defining the extent of the school dropout phenomenon and its geographical and gender distribution. The study will make policy recommendations to the Ministry of Education and will introduce remedial programmes, especially for female dropouts. UNDP has also provided support for in-service training and curriculum development in agricultural training schools.

18. UNESCO has a long tradition of involvement in Palestinian education, through support for the education programme of the Palestine Liberation Organization and for the UNESCO/UNRWA Department of Education. In 1994, UNESCO launched a comprehensive Culture of Peace Programme to give greater emphasis to countries and territories in conflict. Within this context, UNESCO carried out two missions to review the Palestinian education sector in 1994. The missions identified and extended assistance to 11 priority areas. Those for which funds were mobilized and projects initiated included capacity-building of the Ministry of Education; establishment of the Palestinian Curriculum Centre; rehabilitation of 14 schools in the Gaza Strip and 3 schools in the West Bank; the establishment of a model kindergarten in Gaza City; financing of an international workshop for the development of the vocational/technical education system; a project for capacity-building in educational policy formulation and management; and a proposal to establish, through the Palestinian European Academic Cooperation in Education (PEACE) programme network, UNESCO Chairs in Archaeology, Foreign Language Teaching and Marine Sciences.

19. The objectives and strategies of the UNICEF education programme are based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the goals of the World Summit for Children and the National Programme of Action, which advocate the right of all children to basic education. To meet these objectives, UNICEF's Education Programme is implemented through three main projects focusing on formal and non-formal education: early childhood development/psychosocial health; primary

education; and youth and community development. Under the last category, in 1995, 110 community-based camps for children and youth were organized and 700 youth leaders trained in planning educational, recreational, art and environmental activities for children.

20. Since 1950, UNRWA has been the single largest provider of education in the Gaza Strip and a major provider in the West Bank. The overall objective of the UNRWA education programme is to continue to provide general education, in-service teachers' education, vocational, technical and higher education, and university scholarships for refugees. The UNRWA regular educational budget for 1995 was $41.6 million for Gaza and $24.9 million for the West Bank. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993, UNRWA established its Peace Implementation Programme (PIP). The programme targeted basic infrastructural projects in education, health and the social sector. Under PIP, UNRWA received $51.7 million in donor funding for education-related projects and concentrated its efforts on upgrading its facilities.

21. UNRWA has completed the construction of 25 new schools in the Gaza Strip and is in the process of constructing 7 new schools in the West Bank. Over 100 UNRWA and Palestinian Authority schools were upgraded, and funding has been allocated for the construction of over 75 new classrooms and specialized rooms. UNRWA ensures that all its activities are closely coordinated with the Ministry of Education and has undertaken the construction of over 55 playgrounds in its own facilities and Palestinian Authority schools. The UNRWA University Scholarship Schemes benefit students who receive high marks in their secondary school examinations, and UNRWA has initiated a pilot project to train music teachers in its schools in the West Bank. Other projects include construction activities at the Gaza Training Centre and a number of projects to upgrade and extend the Kalandia and Ramallah vocational training centres in the West Bank.

22. The International Labour Organization (ILO) fielded several technical missions to examine the needs of the vocational training sector, with particular reference to workers' education programmes and training activities for Ministry of Labour officials. ILO, through the International Training Centre in Turin, is also assisting the Ministry of Education in a programme for the development of technical colleges.

23. In the area of education, the World Food Programme (WFP) supports vocational training by providing meals to women and youth trainees. In 1996, WFP is assisting nine social institutions by providing daily food rations to 850 youths. Additional assistance is being provided to 100 trainees at two rehabilitation centres for the mentally and physically disabled. Such food assistance provides indirect income support and encourages regular attendance.

3. Main development needs

24. The task of restructuring and developing the educational system inherited by the Palestinian Authority is enormous. The infrastructure had deteriorated and facilities had failed to keep pace with population growth, leading to double and sometimes triple shifting in most schools. The curriculum differed between

the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and vocational training and extracurricular activities were inadequate. Academic standards were particularly affected as a result of the severe interruptions during the years of the intifadah and Israeli countermeasures. Following the transfer of responsibility for education to the Palestinian Authority in 1994, new challenges arose from the continued rapid increase in the school population and the need to accommodate the children of returnees. Statistics indicate that 40 new schools are needed annually to accommodate the growth rate.

25. In its second year of operation, the Ministry of Education believes that it can expand its efforts to effect quality changes in the educational system. In order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, the Ministry has stressed the importance of United Nations agencies and the donor community integrating the following objectives into their policies: improving access to schooling; improving the quality of teaching and learning; and increasing the relevance of education to society's needs.

26. To achieve these global objectives, a National Plan of Action has been prepared by the Ministry of Education, and a number of priorities have been defined as requiring urgent attention and financial and technical assistance. To accommodate the increase in student numbers, a detailed proposal for funding has been prepared at an estimated cost of $230 million, covering both school construction and maintenance, but excluding UNRWA schools and the private sector. School equipment and supplies will come to an estimated $5 million over the next two years. To encourage management decentralization, community participation in decision-making and a merit-based recruitment system, the Ministry is in the process of setting up a policy formulation unit supported by UNDP, UNESCO and the World Bank.

27. To prepare for a unified curriculum, additions to the present Jordanian and Egyptian curricula, followed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively, have been introduced in areas such as Arabic, history and civic education, to overcome the lack of Palestinian specificity. A Curriculum Development Centre was established with the assistance of UNESCO, but it is estimated that the Centre will need five years to produce a new generation of textbooks, at a cost of about $5 million. Pre-service and in-service teacher training will be undertaken to prepare teachers for the new curriculum.

28. New technical colleges are required and schools need to be rehabilitated and upgraded with modern equipment and laboratories. The development of an Educational Management of Information System (EMIS) is a prerequisite for medium- and long-term planning and policy formulation, and is being established with the assistance of UNICEF. The imbalance between enrolment in universities and technical and community colleges needs to be addressed and the linkage between higher education and economic and social needs should be strengthened.

29. The social, emotional and cognitive development needs of young children need to be accorded greater resources and addressed more systematically. Only an estimated 20 to 30 per cent of children aged 3 to 5 attend kindergarten, and unified standards of supervision are lacking. In non-formal education, priority areas for action identified by the Ministry of Youth and Sports aim at

supporting training programmes to develop young people's life skills and promote their involvement in community development.

4. Integrated United Nations approach

30. The peace process has expanded the possibilities for closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Palestinian Authority in the development and delivery of educational services. Major achievements so far have been the promotion of qualitative educational development and building institutional capacity in the Ministry of Education. However, in an effort to move away from emergency interventions towards long-term institution-building, all Palestinian Authority bodies concerned with educational development are in need of further United Nations assistance. Although the peace process is expected to improve economic development in the area, current sources of revenue to finance basic services are still insufficient. Since education accounts for the greatest share of the Palestinian Authority budget, it is particularly vulnerable to financial shortfalls.

31. The overall challenge for the United Nations is to shape a coherent programme, a set of complementary interventions, leading to the improvement and growth of the educational system. Defining complementary roles among United Nations organizations is a priority, so as to ensure that the Palestinian Authority receives the maximum external assistance. Pilot projects undertaken with the support of United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations should be evaluated so that achievements can be applied on a larger scale and on a long-term sustainable basis. United Nations agencies should coordinate among ministries, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions to ensure maximum intersectoral cooperation. Above all, the United Nations programme should be integrated within the framework of the five-year master plan for education, currently being prepared by the Ministry of Education.

32. Through participation in the Local Aid Coordination Committee sectoral working group on education, UNDP will continue to act upon the priorities set by the Ministry of Education. The ongoing project for rehabilitating 18 schools in rural areas of the West Bank will be considerably expanded to include the construction or renovation of additional classrooms, especially targeting the female rural population.

33. Other UNDP educational initiatives are based on its overall Gender in Development Programme, where a two-fold approach has been developed: (a) upstream interventions aimed at enhancing advocacy through a series of policy-level initiatives in support of governmental bodies; (b) downstream interventions to tackle the constraints facing women through initiatives focusing on poverty elimination. A UNDP/United Nations Volunteers (UNV) project aimed at reintegrating youth into civil society focuses on strengthening community-based youth clubs, developing a plan for the institution of a youth council and conducting an assessment of the hopes, skills and needs of young people. UNDP is also developing a programme of intervention in the agricultural education sector to be implemented in 1997.

34. UNESCO will continue to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority in improving educational management, through its regular programme, which provides access to a wide variety of services. UNESCO will support an improved programme in science and mathematics teaching and the creation of a curriculum that is relevant to the specific history, needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people. UNESCO also supports a programme of remedial education for underachieving pupils and for young people who have left the school system without realizing their full potential.

35. UNICEF has been in the forefront of promoting the "software" side of development, emphasizing its human and social dimensions and highlighting its global strategy "First Call for Children", under the local theme "Putting our Children First", and through the joint Palestinian Authority/UNICEF National Programme of Action. The educational component of the Programme embraces early childhood development, primary education and youth and community development.

36. UNRWA requires an annual budget of $65 million to cover its general education programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to ensure access to basic education for all eligible refugee children. UNRWA will promote community involvement in financing education and, where possible, in formulating education policies and priorities. Upgrading of staff skills at all levels remains an important goal, and UNRWA will seek to increase the present two-year teacher training programme to four years. The teaching programme in UNRWA vocational and technical centres will be strengthened.

37. Harmonization between the UNRWA Education Department and the Ministry of Education is taking place at all levels. Specific activities include accreditation of the UNRWA Education Sciences Facility, the introduction of uniform examinations for community colleges and the joint revision of a study plan for vocational training. UNRWA is also cooperating with the Ministry of Education in developing new curricula and textbooks.

38. ILO will continue to assist the Palestinian Authority in developing and strengthening technical training institutions. In particular, ILO will expand vocational education and training projects within the framework of its ongoing activities, such as the programme for the reintegration of ex-detainees, and capacity-building projects for the Ministry of Labour and workers and employers organizations. ILO has also been requested to identify needs and priorities concerning the development of three technical colleges.

39. In 1997, WFP will identify potential partners among non-governmental organizations focusing on women's activities in education. WFP is also considering food assistance as a support for youth summer camps, in collaboration with UNICEF.

B. United Nations assistance in employment generation

1. Background

40. High unemployment and underemployment levels in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip constitute an immediate social and economic challenge to the development

efforts of the Palestinian Authority. Large-scale unemployment and underemployment cause severe damage to Palestinian society and threaten political stability. There are an estimated 20,000 new job seekers each year in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. With one of the world's highest labour force growth rates (nearly 4 per cent), and with nearly half the population under 15 years of age, the Palestinian economy is unable to absorb many of those presently unemployed and is unlikely to accommodate the expected increase in the number of job-seekers in the years ahead. In addition, many of those denied access to the Israeli labour market cannot find work at home. The dependent nature of the Palestinian economy has also limited employment creation and growth. The industrial sector is relatively small (contributing less than 8 per cent of gross domestic product) and most industrial and service sector activities are in the small-scale production and wholesale/retail trades. Major sources of employment are the agriculture and construction sectors. Given continuing economic unpredictability and the lack of an adequate basic infrastructure, large-scale domestic and foreign investment has not been forthcoming.

41. In the first labour force survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in October 1995 with the assistance of ILO, the rate of open unemployment was revealed as 13 per cent in the West Bank and 31 per cent in the Gaza Strip, with an additional 20 per cent registered as underemployed in the two areas. Owing to border closures, Palestinian employment in Israel has fluctuated considerably, decreasing from a daily average of 116,000 in 1992 to 53,000 in 1994 and 29,500 in 1995. The figures had increased to approximately 70,000 in the first two months of 1996, prior to the wave of suicide attacks beginning in late February. The subsequent closure effectively drastically reduced Palestinian employment in Israel: following the gradual easing of the closure, figures had returned to approximately 10,000 by the end of May 1996. At the end of 1995, the Palestinian Authority, with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), projected that during 1996, the unemployment rate would be approximately 23 per cent. As a result of the extended closure, the Palestinian Authority and IMF have revised these projections. Depending on the rate at which trade flows return to pre-closure levels and the possibility of labourers returning to their work in Israel, revised projections are that unemployment may average 31 per cent in 1996.

2. Assistance provided

42. The Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), UNDP and UNRWA, are the principal implementing agencies for projects specifically addressing the problem of unemployment, and their management capacity has expanded considerably in the last year. Under its Peace Implementation Programme (PIP I and II), UNRWA has received over $146 million, primarily for the implementation of small-scale infrastructural projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Projects funded during the initial phase of the UNRWA employment generation programme will be completed during 1996. Progress has been hampered by extended closures, limiting the import of construction materials. However, technical assistance to contractors and other measures designed to increase labour intensity have helped to alleviate this situation.

43. In 1995, UNDP implemented projects amounting to $20 million, up from $8 million in 1994, for projects using labour-intensive methods and designed specifically to address the unemployment problem. UNDP is also implementing a portfolio of small infrastructure projects amounting to over $80 million in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UNDP received funding for programmes totalling over $28 million, which are being co-implemented with PECDAR, Palestinian Authority ministries, municipalities and village councils. In spite of numerous closures, UNDP clean-up, infrastructural rehabilitation and neighbourhood transformation projects have been instrumental in generating employment and improving municipal and social infrastructures.

44. ILO technical missions, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, have devised strategies to address the unemployment issue and introduce labour-intensive works programmes. ILO is also undertaking the following ongoing employment-related activities: the reintegration, through employment, of ex-detainees; assistance to the Ministry of Labour in the development of labour policy and legislation; capacity building for the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce and the Palestinian Trade Union Federation; an income-generating programme for the disabled through the manufacture and maintenance of wheel chairs; assistance to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, including a regular labour force survey; assistance to small enterprise development; a programme to train contractors; and technical assistance, including the preparation of a strategy paper for labour-intensive infrastructure development.

45. Following three fact-finding missions, UNESCO has proposed setting up a programme, employing both specialists and unskilled workers, to safeguard historical sites and monuments in Jericho, Gaza, Hebron and Bethlehem. UNESCO also elaborated a programme to create multipurpose community resource centres in the municipalities of Gaza and Nablus, to include training for women and young people, as well as cultural and informational activities. A centre for the promotion of employment in the handicrafts industry is also planned.

3. Main development needs

46. Employment generation activities supported by the United Nations and the World Bank, in partnership with bilateral donors, have been largely confined to the Gaza Strip, the first major area to come under Palestinian self-rule. However, despite the substantial resources made available by the international community, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip remains high, at times surpassing 50 per cent, and is exacerbated by frequent and prolonged security closures. The need to rehabilitate deteriorated infrastructure has provided opportunities for productive employment in the construction sector based on labour-intensive methods. With the extension, in late 1995, of Palestinian self-rule to major towns and surrounding areas in the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations, the World Bank and donors are in agreement that the emergency employment generation programmes should be extended to that region.

47. United Nations agencies should assist the Palestinian Authority in formulating a clearly defined employment strategy. The sectoral working groups

of the Local Aid Coordination Committee should incorporate, whenever possible, labour-intensive methods in the implementation of their projects. However, the need to address the present crisis should not obscure the fact that unemployment is a structural problem requiring long-term solutions. As part of the development of a job-creation strategy for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, concrete measures must be taken that encompass a combination of policy instruments at both macro- and micro-levels including employment services, training, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, the establishment of a social safety net mechanism, social security, and local and regional cooperation in labour migration.

48. In a situation of limited institutional capacity and resources, immediate attention must be given to integrating employment-generating projects into a comprehensive and coordinated Palestinian employment programme. As identified by the Ministry of Labour, this programme should combine both long-term policies and short-term programmes to address some of the immediate symptoms of unemployment. All components must aim at closing the employment gap and producing income-earning opportunities for all, including the long-term unemployed. To be effective, the programme should be developed as an integral strategy embracing employment generation, private sector development and institution building. While the generation of productive employment is the main priority of the programme, it should also strengthen the policy planning and monitoring capacity of the Palestinian Authority, in particular the Ministry of Labour.

49. In its initial phase, priority components of the Palestinian employment programme should include strengthening the Ministry of Labour's capacity to formulate, implement and coordinate the programme, while simultaneously expanding the number and scope of labour-intensive infrastructure projects and enhancing the labour content of such projects. Training for small-scale contractors should be provided to enhance their capacity to undertake labour-based projects. Small-scale income generating projects targeting women, youth and the disabled should be developed, as should self-employment and small business support schemes. The expansion and improvement of vocational training should also be a priority. The collection, analysis and dissemination of labour statistics and labour market information should be strengthened in order to monitor changes in the labour market. UNDP will support the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and other institutions in producing statistics, including monitoring the impact of unemployment on women.

4. Integrated United Nations approach

50. The sectoral working group on employment generation, following the successful experience gained in the Gaza Strip during 1995, has identified a series of priority projects for the West Bank. Since November 1995, the working group has been cooperating with municipalities and village councils to identify new priority project proposals with a high labour content, targeting short-term development needs. The main priority continues to be to support, through capacity-building, the under-utilized implementation capacity of municipalities, village councils and the technical departments of key ministries, through joint implementation modalities between United Nations agencies and Palestinian

institutions. On-the-job training will continue to be provided for project management, the planning of high labour-content infrastructure activities and the introduction of transparent and accountable methods of project implementation. As in the past, all projects have been designed to generate short-term direct and indirect employment opportunities, to demonstrate a rapid and visible impact and to improve living conditions. The sectoral working group coordinates its activities with the Palestinian Authority and with donors to avoid duplication or the inclusion of projects already under active funding consideration. The projects comply with demands for transparency and accountability as well as rapid implementation.

51. The United Nations strategy should aim at the creation of a flexible "rolling programme" whereby, as one set of projects is under implementation, a new set is being identified and planned, thus permitting uninterrupted continuation. Such a programme can be adjusted to meet the changing employment levels in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

52. In order to implement the United Nations strategy, it will be necessary to strengthen further the implementing capacity of Palestinian Authority institutions. UNDP, UNRWA and the World Bank are presently assisting Palestinian Authority implementing agencies, municipalities and village councils in enhancing their capacity to carry out infrastructure works.

53. UNDP, as co-secretariat to the sectoral working group on employment generation, will continue to participate in identifying new labour-intensive programmes. UNDP will also provide implementing agencies with reporting and monitoring services and assist in selecting consultants and sub-contractors, screening contracts, and procurement and import services. Through its engineering unit, UNDP will support the preparation, design and implementation of projects by providing expertise in the appraisal of proposals and the design of facilities (either directly or through sub-contracts with architectural firms). UNDP will also provide assistance in obtaining building permits, tendering documents and contracts and selecting construction firms and supervising construction. UNDP will continue to assess priority investment needs in the region and identify co-financing mechanisms.

54. UNRWA will continue to address the most pressing infrastructural needs of the Palestinian Authority through its Peace Implementation Programme. Projects include the rehabilitation, replacement and construction of schools and health facilities, as well as further investment in the UNRWA shelter rehabilitation and income generation programmes. UNRWA has a substantial implementation capacity, staffed mainly by Palestinians, which can be further expanded, funds permitting. The large number of projects that it is currently implementing contributes significantly to the alleviation of unemployment. The UNRWA income generation programme, which runs a revolving loan programme in support of small enterprises, also targets job creation as a priority in its project development.

55. ILO, as co-secretariat of the sectoral working group on employment generation, can provide training to Palestinian Authority staff, small and medium-sized contractors, consultants and workers. This approach could be combined with related programmes in employment policy, employment services, labour administration and vocational training. In addition, ILO will continue

to play an active role in assisting the Palestinian Authority in designing income generation activities for disadvantaged groups, including ex-detainees, disabled persons and women.

56. In the long term, sustainable employment will be generated mainly by the private sector. Recently, the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority reached a general agreement on the need for a programme of border industrial zones to attract foreign investment and create employment opportunities. The United Nations agencies with particular expertise in this field, the Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and others, should continue to provide technical assistance to Palestinian Authority agencies to implement this initiative, in close coordination with the World Bank.

C. United Nations assistance in health

1. Background

57. The Palestinian Authority assumed overall responsibility for health in the Gaza Strip and Jericho in May 1994, and the remainder of the West Bank in December 1994. Several factors hindered the development of the sector prior to this, the most significant being the lack of involvement of Palestinians in decision-making regarding their own health system. With the creation of a Ministry of Health, health matters are being addressed with reference to the needs and expectations of the local population. The Palestinian Authority has made commendable progress in implementing its Interim Action Plan, based on the National Health Plan, which was developed in consultation with Palestinian health professionals. The achievements of the Palestinian Authority during its first year of operation included the setting up of the organizational structure of the Ministry of Health, the development of a number of sectoral priorities and policies, and steps to address the sector's requirements in the area of human resources and basic needs.

58. By mid-year 1996, the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 2.468 million, as estimated by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Life expectancy is 70 years for males and 73.5 for females. The total fertility rate is estimated to be 7.44 children per woman in the Gaza Strip and 5.61 children per woman in the West Bank. Health indicators, especially the infant and child mortality rates, resemble those of other countries in the Middle East and those of similar economic backgrounds. The estimated infant mortality rate in 1995 was 32 per 1,000 in Gaza and 25 per 1,000 in the West Bank. The major causes of infant mortality are low birth weight and acute respiratory tract infections. Preventable diseases are under control owing to an expanded programme of immunization. The causes of morbidity and mortality in the adult population resemble those of societies in transition, with non-communicable diseases on the increase and preventable infectious diseases on the decline.

59. There are 24 hospitals, of which 6 are operated by the Ministry of Health and the remainder by non-governmental organizations and UNRWA. There are

1.1 hospital beds per 1,000 people. In 1992, there were 467 primary health care facilities. The number of general practitioners is 1 per 5,000 population; for nurses the figure is 1 per 1,800. There is geographical disparity in terms of health facilities and personnel, with a tendency to favour urban centres in general, and Jerusalem in particular.

2. Assistance provided

60. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993, the main priority of United Nations agencies was to meet urgent sectoral needs in the transitional phase and to plan for long-term sustainable development. United Nations agencies, in collaboration with the Palestinian Authority and the donor community, identified and planned priority interventions for the rehabilitation of the health infrastructure. These interventions, aimed primarily at building, renovating and expanding a number of health facilities, also benefited the local economy. United Nations organizations played a primary role in the implementation of such projects, with their technical expertise and experience on the ground enabling them to initiate projects in a relatively short time.

61. The process of transferring expertise and developing human resources was also facilitated. The United Nations played a vital role in assisting the Palestinian Health Authority in the area of organization and planning. Projects on the management and organization of health care were undertaken by the Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF and the World Bank. United Nations agencies also extended assistance in a number of areas, including support for the expanded programme of immunization, an insurance scheme, the development of a National Essential Drug Programme, the control of acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases and support for maternal health and reproductive health.

62. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has proposed a manpower development project for the Palestinian Authority to provide training for physicians and technicians in the medical fields relevant to the mandate of the agency. In this context, IAEA has sponsored two Palestinian professionals.

63. UNDP is completing a project of renovation and expansion of West Bank hospitals, in Beit Jala, Hebron and Nablus. In coordination with PECDAR, UNDP has implemented the rehabilitation/construction of six clinics and six hospital wards in Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, Shifa Hospital and the Psychiatric Hospital in the Gaza Strip. UNDP, through its Gender Development Programme, supported the Palestinian Coalition for Women's Health in improving the provision of women's health services. The UNDP Local Rural Development Programme, which operates in the northern West Bank, has trained 11 rural women as community health workers.

64. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) first extended assistance in 1987 in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). Two maternal and child health/family planning projects, implemented by UNRWA in coordination with local Palestinian non-governmental organizations, made considerable progress in improving the quality of antenatal care and providing postnatal care. In 1995, the Women's Centre for Reproductive Health Care was established in Bureij camp

to extend information, education and counselling on reproductive health. Activities are carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Health and UNRWA health centres. UNFPA is considering support for the establishment of a similar centre in Gaza City. Also in 1995, in response to a request by the Ministry of Health, UNFPA in collaboration with WHO and UNRWA, fielded a needs assessment and strategic planning mission for women's health and development. Under the umbrella of the Pan-Arab Project for Child Development, UNFPA is also considering supporting a reproductive health module to be integrated into the UNICEF multiple indicator cluster survey planned for 1996. In addition, UNFPA is finalizing an overall programme of assistance to the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the period 1996-1999.

65. UNICEF aims to improve the quality of life of Palestinian children and women through support for maternal and child health programmes and through appropriate primary health care services. UNICEF programmes emphasize the importance of complementarity with the Ministry of Health, other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations in the field of development, community awareness and intersectoral cooperation. This strategy is applied to all the areas within the organization's concern: the expanded programme of immunization, control of diarrhoeal disease, acute respiratory infection, maternal health, the promotion of breast-feeding and the development of a health service management unit. A multiple indicator cluster survey is being implemented that will generate a database on essential indicators, especially women's and children's health.

66. UNRWA continues to maintain and upgrade its medical infrastructure at the primary care level. In both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA offers general primary health care, mother and child care, dental care and a range of specialist services. UNRWA operates 34 health centres in the West Bank and 17 in the Gaza Strip. In addition, UNRWA subsidizes 50 out of 85 beds at Ahli Arab Hospital in the Gaza Strip and is in the process of completing the construction of the 232-bed European Hospital near Khan Younis. UNRWA also provides refugees with access to hospital services at the secondary and tertiary level, including the UNRWA hospital in Qalqilia. The Agency's regular health budget for 1995 was $14.6 million for the West Bank and $14.7 million for the Gaza Strip.

67. Under the Agency's Peace Implementation Programme, phase I (PIP I), UNRWA launched a large number of health-related projects, including the maintenance and construction of UNRWA and Palestinian Authority clinics and the procurement and supply of medical equipment, together with a number of interventions in the field of environmental health. Building on the success of the first phase, UNRWA launched PIP II in September 1994. This entailed a heightened focus on environmental health, and funding was received for a number of sewerage and drainage projects in Deir el-Balah and Beach Camp in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, funds were allocated for the construction of a public health laboratory and the completion of a sewerage system in Tulkarm. Following a tripartite evaluation by UNFPA, UNRWA and the Ministry of Health of the UNRWA expanded maternal health project in the Gaza Strip, a strategic plan and operational framework for a sustainable women's health programme was developed in the autumn of 1995. UNRWA efforts also went into the improvement of maternal health services with particular emphasis on the training of staff of UNRWA, the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations.

68. UNRWA also maintains a high level of coordination and harmonization of health policies and services with the Ministry of Health, with the aim of facilitating a smooth handover of the UNRWA health care system. UNRWA conducts close consultations with the Ministry of Health on all health-related matters, to identify areas where resources can be shared. A high-level Ministry of Health and UNRWA policy committee on the European Gaza Hospital was established to discuss the future management of the facility. UNRWA will hand over a newly constructed primary health care clinic in the West Bank to the Ministry of Health.

69. WFP activities in the Gaza Strip presently target 6,600 households registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs as hardship cases, the majority of which consist of women heads of household with large numbers of dependants. WFP food assistance is provided to complement the families' social entitlement package of a cash subsidy and health insurance. WFP is paying special attention to primary health care and is supporting two year-long projects for pregnant women, nursing mothers and pre-school children. WFP food aid is distributed as take-home family rations to poor women to encourage them to visit clinics and maternal child health centres operated by local non-governmental organizations. A total of 1,000 women and their children are benefiting from these projects.

70. In 1997, WFP will increase its level of assistance to hardship cases registered in the Ministry of Social Affairs safety net programme. Women heads of households and their daughters will be provided with direct counselling on health and nutrition-related subjects and trained in first aid. WFP is also exploring the possibility of collaborating with local non-governmental organizations in support of community-based, health-related interventions. Another proposal being considered is to provide food assistance as a budgetary support to public sector hospitals.

71. WHO, at the request of the Ministry of Health, provided the Ministry of Health with direct financial assistance and fielded several assessment missions. This assistance permitted the Ministry of Health to establish a number of units to develop strategic plans for intersectoral coordination and national health planning. Many of these units were subsequently absorbed by the Ministry of Health. WHO technical support to the Ministry of Health included the establishment of a plan for the regular supply and rational use of drugs. WHO is also providing assistance to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture in the development of a zoonotic disease policy. A workshop on zoonotic diseases was organized as a prelude to an agreement on a common policy. Other technical assistance included fielding a joint UNDP/UNICEF/WHO mission to formulate project proposals for the prevention of hearing impairment and the improvement of nutrition and mother and child health, under the auspices of the IMPACT (International Initiative Against Avoidable Disablement) scheme.

72. WHO also rehabilitated and equipped four health facilities in the Gaza Strip and provided the centres with basic medical equipment. A supply of medicine and vaccines to cover needs over a six-month period was provided for all government health facilities. Development began on the Khan Younis Rehabilitation Centre, which will provide physiotherapy services to the southern sector of the Gaza Strip. As part of the same project, WHO provided equipment

for a number of secondary health care facilities and the public health laboratory in the Gaza Strip.

73. WHO also financed the establishment of a Continuing Education Centre and a Public Health Training Centre in Gaza, and organized a total of 13 courses at the same facilities. Other courses covered research skills, management skills, health management information systems, public health laboratory technology, as well as a course for ambulance attendants and a cardiac course for nurses. WHO also organized a workshop, attended by over 300 participants, for the development of quality control norms in health service delivery.

74. In addition, WHO awarded several fellowships to senior Palestinian employees of the Ministry of Health and is collaborating with Birzeit University in developing a diploma course in primary health care. Funding for research was provided to various Palestinian institutions, including Al Quds University, which is carrying out a study on the occurrence of the B-Thalassaemia trait in Palestinian students and is providing counselling on the disease.

3. Main development needs

75. The fragmentation of health services has been a limiting factor in the development of an integrated, efficient health system. In addition to the Ministry of Health, active providers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip include UNRWA, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, with varying policies, objectives and interests. The introduction of strategic planning and a comprehensive system to regulate, monitor, evaluate and harmonize services remain an important objective.

76. The health system inherited by the Ministry of Health, has not yet been reoriented to the comprehensive approach to primary health care envisaged in the National Health Plan. The integration of preventive and promotive strategies in the curative services is still needed. The development and implementation of clearer health policies and a major reorientation of the system are essential for the future. A more comprehensive approach to women's health also needs to be developed.

77. There are discrepancies between the formal training and work experience of health staff, and the functions they are required to perform. The training, work experience and medical background of health managers also present obstacles to the implementation of appropriately oriented health policies. There is also a need for a comprehensive and cohesive revision of health legislation, as existing legislation consists of inherited Ottoman, British, Egyptian and Jordanian laws and Israeli Civil Administration orders, which reflect neither recent trends and developments in health, nor the policy choices made by the Palestinian Authority.

4. Integrated United Nations approach

78. United Nations support for the Palestinian Authority in the initial phase of the transition period has focused primarily on infrastructural development

and meeting basic recurrent costs. However, with the increasing efficiency of Palestinian institutions, the focus of the United Nations and donors should now shift to the transfer of technical expertise and the development of human resources. The United Nations approach is based on the mandates of the respective organizations and on the recommendations of a number of recent United Nations conferences. Women should be empowered to become decision-makers in their own right and influence the health policy-making process. Above all, the United Nations strategy in the health sector should be based on the Palestinian Authority's National Health Plan and Interim Action Plan.

79. The strategies adopted by the United Nations in 1995 have proved their efficacy and are still valid for the next phase of the development effort. These focus on providing technical support and contributing to primary health care infrastructural projects; strengthening and developing essential health services, especially reproductive health and family planning; facilitating coordination between United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and bilateral bodies; advising on institutional policies, with particular reference to gender-related issues; assisting in developing a system for collecting gender-disaggregated health sector data, as part of a health management information system; strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Health to manage the overall health system; and assisting in the formulation of policies and strategies for human resources development.

80. The United Nations approach should adopt certain guiding principles. Strategies should be cross-sectoral and complement the efforts of other United Nations agencies, as well as the Palestinian Authority. The ongoing harmonization of policies between the two main providers, UNRWA and the Ministry of Health, should be extended to include non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Approaches developed in other countries provide the United Nations with a range of strategic options to make interventions more cost effective. Such an approach will reduce expenditure on secondary and tertiary health facilities, specialist training and other costly curative interventions in favour of preventive and promotive activities, local preferences and sustainability.

81. Improved management through the introduction of continuous training, the decentralization of administrative and budgetary authorities and the contracting of services plays a major role in strengthening the health system. United Nations agencies should assist the Ministry of Health in rationalizing the health insurance scheme and promoting initiatives aimed at increasing popular involvement in sustaining the health system. The United Nations should also assist the Ministry of Health in orienting the health system towards primary health care, as outlined in the National Health Plan. The United Nations should also stress the importance of administrative and financial decentralization to increase the relevance of health services to local needs.

D. United Nations assistance in infrastructure

1. Background

82. Infrastructure development is intimately related to the development of every other economic and social sector. Roads, water and sanitation, electricity and communication systems, hospitals and schools all constitute the foundation for the development of education, health care, industry, business and agriculture.

83. Despite the assistance provided thus far for housing, as well as the recent strong growth in private sector activity, the sector remains underdeveloped. The number of units constructed in the past few years falls well short of the present need of 40,000 housing units for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as estimated by the Ministry of Housing in 1995.

84. Negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and donor countries concerning the construction of an airport and sea port progressed during 1995. An airport in the Rafah area, in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, is under construction, and the Palestinian Authority expects that it will become operational by late 1996. Although a number of studies relating to urban transportation planning have been conducted, the land transportation system is underdeveloped. Urban and rural roads are in an advanced state of disrepair and present a significant obstacle to economic development.

85. Although electricity demand for both domestic and industrial use continues to increase, supply remains static. Supply may soon increase owing to the involvement of the private sector and donors interested in assisting in the construction of a power generator in the Gaza Strip. Existing telecommunications systems are also unable to satisfy growing public demand. The private sector is expected to become involved in this area through the recently established Palestinian Telecommunications Company, a public share holding company established to provide communications services to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

86. The Ministry of Health intends to implement the recommendations of its Hospital Master Plan for the extension and upgrading of existing health facilities and the construction of new hospitals. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has placed the rehabilitation and development of its material resources - the construction, upgrading and equipping of educational facilities - at the top of its priorities. The Ministry is targeting deprived rural areas and creating facilities specifically for girls.

87. The most significant development in the water sector during 1995 was the establishment of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), which assumed responsibility for coordinating activities in this sector and for establishing priority investment and technical assistance needs. However, waste water disposal remains a problem. Sewage treatment plants, where they exist, are inadequate and require extensive rehabilitation and maintenance. Responsibility remains with the municipalities. No specialized authority has yet been established to ensure a systematic approach to the improvement of the sector or to prioritize investment needs.

88. The agricultural sector, a mainstay of the Palestinian economy and a major source of employment, faces several constraints. Access to natural resources remains restricted, physical infrastructure is inadequate and modern services and marketing facilities are lacking. In addition, the agricultural sector needs further assistance to address urgent needs in agricultural development, planning and policy-making.

2. Assistance provided

89. Approximately 70 per cent of the budget of UNDP for the occupied territories during 1995 and early 1996 was expended in the education, health, housing, sanitation and water sectors. Projects consist of an integrated package of capital assistance, training and technical assistance, with capital assistance accounting for 80 per cent of the programme. Whenever possible, construction activities include labour-intensive techniques. The ongoing employment generation programme, supported by UNDP, combines the objectives of improving service and basic infrastructure with creating job opportunities. Innovative project implementation arrangements have been adopted in order to ensure the full participation of Palestinian institutions.

90. In the water sector, UNDP provided assistance to seven villages in 1995. Projects ranged from the rehabilitation of existing water supply and distribution systems to the construction of new systems and the training of local council technical staff in operation and maintenance. In urban areas, UNDP has completed the rehabilitation of part of the Tulkarm water system, as well as the implementation of three other projects in Rafah, Ramallah and Nablus. One ongoing project involves the preparation of a water master plan for Khan Younis city and refugee camp, and the rehabilitation and upgrading of the existing system. In addition, two related projects in the Hebron District are under implementation. Following the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a new assistance programme was developed by UNDP to respond to Palestinian needs, consistent with annex III, appendix 1, article 40, of the Agreement on water. UNDP will design and construct the transmission line from a new well, funded by the Government of Israel, to the residential areas of Jenin City.

91. At the institutional level, UNDP has been supporting the management of water resources through the establishment of the Water Resources Action Program (WRAP) in April 1994. WRAP is now almost fully integrated into PWA and the project is entering into its second phase, which involves support for the formulation and implementation of a PWA policy. Participation in the development of a Palestinian strategy on waste water treatment and reuse is also a high priority for UNDP.

92. UNDP initiated a project in 1995 to rehabilitate a school and cultural complex in the city of Jericho to serve the needs of approximately 2,000 students. UNDP also launched a comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of 18 schools in West Bank rural communities and the premises of the Ministry of Education in Ramallah. The programme, which targets the rural female population, is expected to expand in 1997. As part of the Employment Generation

Programme, UNDP, in cooperation with PECDAR, has undertaken minor infrastructure works in 19 educational facilities throughout the Gaza Strip.

93. UNDP continued its upgrading and renovation of Beit Jala Hospital near Bethlehem. Work is expected to be completed in 1996. Construction activities to expand the Women's Union Hospital in Nablus was completed, and the two-storey annex will accommodate three operating theatres and intensive care units. In addition, UNDP, in coordination with PECDAR, has rehabilitated or constructed six clinics and six hospital wards for Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis and the Shifa Hospital and Psychiatric Hospital in Gaza City. These projects form part of the Employment Generation Programme funded by the Government of Sweden. UNDP has also procured hospital equipment and supplies for Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis and for Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.

94. In the agricultural sector, UNDP is revitalizing two Palestinian intermediate-level agricultural training schools at Al-Aroub near Hebron and Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip. The aim of the project is to renovate existing physical facilities in both centres through the construction of new classrooms and dormitories and the rehabilitation of model farms. Throughout 1995, UNDP also supported a number of private sector initiatives such as the procurement of equipment for the Ramallah poultry cooperative, as well as supplying additional investments to the Gaza Citrus Plant. UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) are supporting a local and rural development programme in the district of Jenin. In addition to the local and rural development programme, UNDP is also supporting a number of village councils in their efforts to be upgraded as municipalities.

95. UNDP is implementing a housing project in Beit Hanoun that will provide 256 housing units for families of the Palestinian police force. Construction commenced in March 1995 and is expected to be completed by the end of 1996.

96. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September 1993, UNRWA established its Peace Implementation Programme (PIP). This programme primarily targeted basic infrastructure projects in the education, health, and social sectors. Following the success of its first phase, PIP II was launched in September 1994. UNRWA prioritized projects under PIP II, emphasizing those which can be implemented immediately and do not add significant recurrent costs and have a large direct labour component. UNRWA maintains a priority short list of projects, focusing mainly on the construction of schools, classrooms and shelters. The primary focus is the continuous strengthening of basic physical infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the aim of improving refugee living conditions and contributing to employment generation. UNRWA is also preparing for the eventual hand over of its services to the Palestinian Authority.

97. Prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, UNRWA assumed a lead role in planning for sustainable development in the environmental health sector. Since the establishment of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and PECDAR and the subsequent strengthening of local capacity within this sector, UNRWA has been coordinating closely with the Palestinian Authority. UNRWA is implementing environmental health projects amounting to $27 million

under PIP I. Under PIP II, UNRWA received $17.3 million for projects for the improvement of environmental conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and is seeking over $110 million in donor funding for additional projects.

98. UNRWA is implementing education-related projects, amounting to $48.3 million, under PIP I and II. The construction of additional schools and classrooms and the replacement of unsuitable premises will enhance the quality of education which the Agency provides to the refugee population. The anticipated return of refugee families will place additional pressure on the Agency's education facilities. UNRWA is still seeking $85.7 million in funding for education projects under PIP II.

99. UNRWA is implementing health projects amounting to $50.8 million under its PIP I and II programmes. The focus of the programme is to maintain and upgrade the health infrastructure at the primary level in close coordination with the Palestinian Health Authority. UNRWA is still seeking over $2 million in donor funding for health-related projects and additional funding for the European Gaza Hospital near Khan Younis, the first new hospital to be built in the Gaza Strip in over 25 years. Since the establishment of PIP, UNRWA has received $27.4 million in funding for shelter upgrading and reconstruction. Potential beneficiaries are selected on the basis of established socio-economic hardship criteria. The work is carried out by local contractors or on a self-help basis. UNRWA is still seeking $11 million for the West Bank and $7 million in funds for Gaza.

100. Following a mission by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), three projects were identified. An ICAO project to support the Palestinian Civil Aviation Authority has been included in the Palestinian Authority's list of priority projects.

101. As a result of various missions by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) during 1995, a study was finalized and a number of priority projects were identified. A training workshop was conducted and several fellowships were awarded to staff in the Ministry of Planning and Telecommunications to participate in regional activities organized by ITU. Following a mission to assess the priority needs of the Ministry of Planning and Telecommunications, ITU formulated a technical assistance programme for 1996-1997. ITU has seconded a senior expert in telecommunications operations and management to the Ministry of Planning and Telecommunications for six months.

102. An International Maritime Organization (IMO) advisory mission visited the Gaza Strip to assess the needs in the maritime sector. As a result, two project profiles were prepared, with a project entitled "Establishment of a maritime administration" being included in the Palestine Authority's Core Investment Programme. Following a Universal Postal Union (UPU) mission in 1995, a number of priorities were identified and two projects formulated. The project entitled "Rehabilitation of the postal services" was also included in the Core Investment Programme.

103. UNESCO activities in the field of educational infrastructure included a project to rehabilitate schools in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. By

January 1996, 17 schools were rehabilitated and furnished. A model kindergarten in Gaza City was also constructed, to serve up to 50 disadvantaged children.

3. Main development needs

104. In view of the enormous needs of infrastructural development, the first priority must be the rehabilitation, operation and maintenance of existing physical infrastructure facilities. Simultaneously, sustainable capacity must be developed to manage, operate and maintain these facilities, through the establishment of adequate management systems and structures, on-the-job training and the transfer of skills and knowledge. All capital investments in infrastructure should be combined with appropriate technical assistance packages. In addition, support for future development planning should be coordinated with Palestinian institutions, in particular the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

105. Infrastructural requirements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip - in the agriculture, education, health, industry, sanitation and water sectors - are similar in terms of the type of projects needed. However, it is increasingly evident that needs vary between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and that development priorities should be tailored accordingly. Population density, availability of key natural resources, per capita income and urban and agricultural conditions differ between the crowded coastal plain and the less densely populated West Bank. In view of the limited availability of land, a regulated programme of land use is a prerequisite for all other forms of infrastructural development, and such development should incorporate strict guidelines for the protection of the environment and of human resources.

106. Dwindling water resources, the growth of the agricultural sector and a rising population necessitate the creation of efficient water preservation and distribution systems. Palestinian experts in water resource planning and management require assistance in the field of water policy, legislation and management strategies. Closely related to the question of water resources is the issue of waste water disposal and reuse. Inadequate sewage systems and the absence of proper treatment and disposal schemes threaten both the quality of the water supply and public health.

107. The revival of the agricultural sector features prominently in Palestinian development planning. To encourage private investment, the improvement of the legal, regulatory and institutional framework is necessary. Basic agricultural infrastructure - schools, laboratories, quarantine stations, research stations - also requires upgrading.

108. In order for Palestinian industry to develop and become competitive, a proper transportation system and modern electric and telecommunications networks are necessary. Power generation plants, energy planning and information systems, energy efficiency programmes and renewable energy technologies are required. Similarly, the lack of a modern telecommunications network has a negative impact on the ability of Palestinian business and industry to compete.

109. The educational infrastructure requires upgrading, and existing material resources, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries and playgrounds, need rehabilitation and expansion. Rural communities should be targeted, especially those in inaccessible areas and where female pupils are underrepresented.

110. The National Health Plan of the Ministry of Health focuses on the rehabilitation, renovation and expansion of tertiary health care facilities. The first priority is to provide equal access to high quality hospital care. The National Health Plan envisages providing increasing bed capacity in under-served districts of the West Bank. The second priority is the provision of operating theatres and intensive-care equipment.

111. The rate of house construction cannot meet existing needs, especially those of low-income families. Demand will continue to grow, given the high rate of population growth and the expected rise in the number of returnees. The Palestinian Authority is currently devising a strategy to promote private sector financing for housing and to increase the supply of affordable housing for the low-income segment of the population. The main elements of this strategy are the provision of long-term financing and insurance facilities to promote commercial bank financing for housing; the establishment of a housing bank, targeting assistance and subsidies to needy households; the upgrading of infrastructure in low-income neighbourhoods; and legal and regulatory reforms to encourage private sector participation in the development of the housing sector. It is recommended that the Palestinian Authority act as a facilitator in housing provision and a generator of job opportunities.

4. Integrated United Nations approach

112. The primary elements of the United Nations strategy to support the development of the Palestinian Authority efforts in infrastructure are the continued rehabilitation of basic education, health and agriculture, as well as adopting labour intensive techniques in the design and implementation of projects. A realistic assessment of the situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip shows that the Palestinian Authority lacks the financial resources to implement and manage major infrastructure projects at this time. The United Nations strategy for infrastructure development should fully support the preliminary statement on the Palestinian development strategy, presented to the Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People in Paris on 9 January 1996.

113. There is an urgent need for both the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and investment in new strategic facilities, with potential for regional linkages. Although significant progress has been made in the implementation of the World Bank-supported Emergency Rehabilitation Program and other donor-funded programmes, rehabilitation and upgrading is still needed for electricity distribution, existing roads, drainage, water supply and waste water treatment systems, as well as solid waste collection and disposal.

114. The education sector suffered inadequate levels of investment in the past, which the Palestinian Authority's Core Investment Programme is addressing by rehabilitating and expanding basic education facilities and strengthening

educational management. The main priorities are the rehabilitation of existing schools and the construction of new ones to overcome the problem of overcrowding, the upgrading of higher education facilities and establishing art, cultural and recreational institutions. The ongoing UNRWA Peace Implementation Programme is an essential component of the development effort in this sector. The Peace Implementation Programme will also continue to benefit the health sector, as will WHO through its role as secretariat to the sectoral working group on health. This sector faces difficulties owing to the shortage of hospitals, staff and equipment, as a result of the tripling of the West Bank and Gaza Strip population since 1967. Infrastructure is inadequate and there are disparities in the quality of health care services. Priorities include improving the primary health care system and consolidating hospital-based care. The Core Investment Programme focuses on the rehabilitation of existing facilities and the extension of basic health care infrastructure to those areas where needs are most urgent.

115. UNDP will assist the agricultural sector through the development of an investment programme for the revitalization of the research, extension and agricultural training sub-sector. A number of feasibility studies will be developed for priority physical infrastructure needs. These activities will be developed in coordination with the institutional capacity-building support which UNDP will provide to the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, in terms of policy development and strategic planning. In addition, UNDP and UNCDF will continue to support the relevant ministries and local authorities in the area of local planning and financing for development.

E. United Nations assistance in institution-building

1. Background

116. The Palestinian Authority assumed responsibility for central administration functions in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area in May 1994, following the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. The scope of the powers of the Palestinian Authority was extended to certain defined spheres of central government responsibility throughout the West Bank in December 1994. In addition, throughout the latter months of 1995, following the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Authority assumed full self-rule and civil administration responsibilities in most West Bank cities and in many towns and villages. The mandate of the Palestinian Authority now covers the majority of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, although a much smaller percentage of the actual territory.

117. Palestinian institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip comprise three distinct categories: the Palestinian Authority central administration, local government and non-governmental organizations. The central administration has absorbed former employees of the Israeli Civil Administration, staff of the technical and operational departments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, staff from some local non-governmental organizations and individuals from the private sector. A comprehensive manpower development programme is needed, to take into account the different backgrounds and technical capacities of central administration employees.

118. In the area of local government, Palestinian public institutions have existed for decades in the form of village councils, local development councils and municipal administrations. At the non-governmental level, a large number of Palestinian non-governmental organizations, including charitable societies, cooperatives, research centres and community-based organizations, have operated in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Many non-governmental organizations have served - and continue to serve - vital public and quasi-public functions. Support from the United Nations has been provided to, and through, this network of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. At all of these administrative levels, it is necessary to develop sustainable institutions that can deliver public services to the Palestinian population in an efficient and effective manner.

2. Assistance provided

119. In response to the changes that have occurred since the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles, United Nations assistance to institution-building has evolved rapidly, focusing on assisting in the organization and start-up of the Palestinian Authority. The United Nations is assisting Palestinian Authority ministries and institutions to coordinate their activities and formulate central-level policies in different sectors, as well as to build up the Authority's institutional structures.

120. In 1994 and 1995, UNDP responded to the most pressing needs of the Palestinian Authority by providing emergency start-up funding and procurement support to 19 Palestinian Authority ministries and institutions. UNDP also continued its tradition of public sector support at the municipal and local levels, primarily through large-scale infrastructure investments, combined with training and technical assistance. Since early 1995, UNDP has been implementing the TOKTEN Programme (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals), which has become a key source of short-term technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The TOKTEN Programme sponsors the return of expatriate Palestinians to provide policy advisory services, consultancy studies and training to Palestinian Authority ministries, universities, research centres and quasi-public institutions.

121. In a complementary manner, UNV is providing specialists to work within Palestinian Authority ministries for long-term missions (1-2 years), to support policy and strategy formulation, prioritization of needs and identification of project and funding sources. With current UNDP funding, a UNV umbrella project is providing support to the Ministries of Social Affairs, Youth and Sports, Education, and Tourism and Antiquities. The UNV modality is also being utilized in a UNDP project to give support to women's departments in the Ministries of Social Affairs, Youth and Sports, Planning and International Cooperation, and Health. In addition, a team of four UNV specialists, through its White Helmets Initiative, is lending expertise to the Municipality of Gaza in its long-term urban planning process.

122. In 1995, UNDP assisted in the establishment of the interministerial task force for public administration development and public sector management, working closely with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

UNDP sponsored a mission from its Management Development and Governance Division, which helped to set out the priority needs of the Palestinian Authority and made recommendations for a public administration development programme. UNDP has also assisted in the formulation and ongoing implementation of the Palestinian Authority's Public Administration Training Programme for civil servants. In addition, UNDP is supporting the efforts of women's departments within Palestinian Authority ministries to enhance their capacity to integrate gender concerns into the development process. The employment-generating public works programme, developed with assistance from UNDP and donors, is building local institutional capacity in the form of the PECDAR Programme Management Unit in Gaza. Progress in the development of the Programme Management Unit has been central to the development and implementation of infrastructure rehabilitation and construction programmes.

123. UNDP also supported the establishment of the Palestinian Water Authority in 1995, through technical and advisory support provided through the Water Resources Action Programme. In the field of agriculture, UNDP has commissioned the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to undertake a formulation mission to develop an institution-building programme to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture in policy formulation and planning.

124. UNRWA, through its long history of assistance to Palestinian refugees, plays a large role in the West Bank and Gaza Strip public sector, particularly in education, health and social services. UNRWA employs over 5,500 teachers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who provide primary, preparatory and vocational schooling to 177,000 students. UNRWA offers basic health and social services to over 1.2 million registered refugees, operates approximately 52 out-patient facilities and employs 130 physicians and 1,500 other health care workers. In the Gaza Strip, UNRWA provides monthly in-kind support to almost 100,000 of the poorest refugees. The Agency's activities over the past 45 years have built up substantive local capacity and dramatically improved the Palestinian human resource base. These capacities help set the agenda for institutional development, in particular in the area of public management and administration.

125. The new UNICEF programme of cooperation for 1996-1997 includes a two-fold strategy for the survival, protection and development of children: (a) providing emergency relief and rehabilitation services during the transition stage; (b) developing a medium- to long-term capacity-building programme for governmental and non-governmental institutions and for empowering communities. This strategy will focus on developing policies and systems and building institutions to promote the rights of children and women, under the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

126. In 1994-1995, ILO initiated a long-term project for the foundation and development of the Ministry of Labour. ILO assisted the Ministry in integrating offices previously managed by the Israeli Civil Administration. Branch offices of the Ministry of Labour were set up in Gaza and Jericho. ILO also assisted the Ministry in developing labour inspection services and elaborating a labour code. Training of labour market agents and of labour inspectors has already started.

127. In addition, ILO assisted the Ministry of Social Affairs in designing and implementing a programme for the reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-detainees. The Ministry of Social Affairs and ILO are undertaking activities related to vocational rehabilitation. At the request of the Palestinian Authority, ILO formulated a proposal on "A Palestinian employment programme: a medium-term strategy" in 1995, to provide a framework to design policies and programmes for sustainable and productive job creation. The ultimate objective of the Palestine employment programme is to enhance the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to undertake policy and programme planning on employment and labour market issues.

128. In addition, with the assistance of ILO, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics finalized the first Palestinian labour force survey in early 1996. Another ILO project launched at the beginning of 1995 upgraded the equipment of the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and provided training and technical expertise. ILO has also supported workers' organizations such as the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions by promoting trade union rights, enhancing the organizational structure of the Federation and improving trade union management and services.

129. WFP assistance aims to improve the delivery of public services by the Department of Rehabilitation and Relief of the Ministry of Social Welfare. To enhance the skills of 50 social workers within the Ministry, WFP will organize six workshops throughout 1996, focusing on monitoring and data collection techniques and awareness-raising on issues related to gender, nutrition, education, health and environmental sanitation.

130. The Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Secretariat is developing a project to improve the criminal justice division in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in order to complement other ongoing projects in this field. The aim is to improve the administration of the criminal justice system by providing assistance in drafting and reviewing laws and building the capacity of criminal justice personnel through training courses.

131. The United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories continues to coordinate bilateral and multilateral training programmes for the Palestinian police force. The main objective has been to gradually transform international training efforts into a longer-term framework to enable the police to undertake its own specialized training. During 1995, the police force programme focused on the need to establish a police academy, to be built in Nablus. Meetings between prospective donors, the Palestinian police and the Mayor of Nablus have been facilitated through the Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. In the first half of 1996, more than 550 policemen received training in the following areas: advanced driving, basic forensic science, drug law enforcement, human rights, maintenance of public order, management development and training, and management training for traffic police and women police management. The Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories provides support services to donors, including the facilitation and briefing of visiting missions and trainers, as well as assisting in the monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of courses. Training courses are designed to meet needs identified by the Palestinian police force and expressed to the international community, through the Local Aid Coordination

Committee sectoral working group on the police, for which the Office serves as secretariat.

132. The Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations Secretariat has secured funding for a two-year project for the strengthening of the rule of law in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It will be implemented by a project team to be located in Gaza, and will include support for law reform, training and advisory services to police, prison officials, lawyers and judges, as well as technical and financial support for local human rights organizations and the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens Rights.

133. WHO assistance has continued to focus mainly on building an infrastructure for primary health care, secondary health care and environmental health, especially in the Gaza Strip. WHO provided resources for the establishment and operation of a number of departments of the Ministry of Health. WHO also responded to the request of the Palestinian Council for Health for financial and other assistance in the following fields: recruitment of staff and the equipping of five units responsible for the transfer of health services to the Palestinian Authority; the establishment of a health data system to serve as the basis for health planning; the design and evaluation of an insurance system; the design of a regulatory framework for health services; and the establishment of priorities for the environmental-health sector.

134. In 1994 and 1995, UNFPA fielded a number of technical advisory missions to assist the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in formulating a population and housing census project. The project will contribute to building the institutional capabilities of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics through technical assistance from UNFPA and the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis; the recruitment and training of field workers, statisticians and data-processing specialists; and the provision of data-processing and other equipment for collecting and analysing population data. Census data will be collected and analysed by gender to provide the basis for the formulation of specific policies to respond to women's needs. To help build the operational capabilities of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, UNFPA may provide training for its staff and for non-governmental organizations in financial and administrative rules and procedures. These above activities would be implemented as part of the UNFPA Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (1996-1999), which is being finalized.

135. In addition, UNFPA assisted in the establishment of a women's centre for reproductive health care, social assistance, legal counselling and community education in the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The centre was inaugurated in December 1995, and its activities are being implemented by local non-governmental organizations, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and UNRWA. UNFPA is considering support for the establishment of a similar centre in Gaza City. UNFPA is also planning to provide technical assistance and training to the Women's Health and Development Department of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and women's non-governmental organizations.

136. The activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) focus on institutionalizing gender planning within emerging Palestinian

Authority bodies. The recent activities of UNIFEM included supporting preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, by providing training to Palestinian participants. Since the Conference, UNIFEM has launched follow-up activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through a regional project that targets governmental mechanisms and non-governmental organizations to promote the implementation of the platform of action adopted in Beijing. UNIFEM is also providing support for the establishment of a Women in Development Facilitation Unit in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which will endeavour to integrate gender issues into existing donor coordination mechanisms.

137. Following an assessment mission in October 1995, the Department for Development Support and Management Services formulated five project documents, comprising a comprehensive package of assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the area of financial management. The Department also supported the United Nations Seminar on Palestinian Administrative, Managerial and Financial Needs and Challenges, held in June 1995.

138. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has developed three project proposals aimed at strengthening the institutional framework of the telecommunications sector: Advisory support to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications; a telecommunication training centre; and a telecommunication master plan. Other ITU activities in 1995 included assisting the Ministry of Telecommunications in its assessment of priority needs and conducting an organizational development training workshop in November 1995 for telecommunications managers.

139. Following assessment missions, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) has prepared a project document entitled "Housing policy and projects", to assist the Ministry of Housing in the preparation and formulation of a comprehensive housing policy and implementation strategy, including institutional and regulatory frameworks, land regulations, housing and municipal finance, and monitoring mechanisms.

140. In partnership with the Palestinian Authority, UNESCO has developed project proposals in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. In addition, during 1995-1996, UNESCO undertook the following activities: a human resources project for the Ministry of Education; an international meeting of experts on music culture in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; a training seminar for theatre instructors; and technical assistance and equipment to the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation. In addition, UNESCO will soon be initiating a project to restructure and strengthen the Palestinian News Agency (WAFA).

141. UPU undertook an assessment mission in 1995 and formulated a project to develop the human resources capacity of the Palestinian postal system through training of its staff in management and postal operations.

142. As part of its strategy to build up institutional capabilities in the areas of trade, finance, and related services, UNCTAD fielded an advisory mission to the Ministry of Transport, to identify requirements and elaborate a project of technical cooperation in the development and management of the Gaza commercial sea port. The project foresees technical assistance from UNCTAD, primarily in the establishment of institutional, operational and managerial capacities, and

the necessary legal framework for the proper setting up and functioning of the port.

143. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), has formulated two projects. The project entitled "Training in public administration" aims to strengthen the capacity of senior officials and institutions in budgeting, financial management, debt management and financial negotiations. Two workshops on financial management were conducted by UNITAR in Gaza and Ramallah in December 1995. The project entitled "Training for establishing a Palestinian Land Information System and Mapping (PALISMAP)" aims to establish a geographic information infrastructure to facilitate access to, and use of, geoinformation and to improve the mapping capabilities of relevant ministries.

144. The strategy of the United Nations Drug Control Programme focuses on a multisectoral approach to coordinate and integrate drug control policies into the broader developmental policies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Programme is developing subregional cooperation with neighbouring countries (Jordan, Egypt, Israel). In 1995, in close collaboration with the Palestinian Authority, the Programme prepared the project entitled "Multi-sectoral drug control assistance to the Palestinian Authority", which will provide technical assistance (a) to establish a drug control institutional framework; (b) to reduce the illicit supply of narcotic drugs through improved detection, interdiction and prosecution capacities; and (c) to prevent and reduce drug abuse through improved awareness, treatment and rehabilitation methods. Emphasis will be placed on capacity-building through training in the above areas.

145. ESCWA has assisted in assessing the restructuring and rehabilitation of public agricultural institutions and in assessing the role of non-governmental organizations in the agricultural sector, with an emphasis on agricultural credit institutions. ESCWA also assisted in the rehabilitation and development of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics through training programmes, with an emphasis on new systems for national accounts and the development of gender statistics.

146. UNEP conducted a course in December 1995 to assist the Regional Training Group of the Multilateral Working Group on Water. The aim was to provide participants with an analytical framework on sustainable freshwater use in the Middle East.

147. UNIDO has developed a strategy for technical assistance in private sector development for industry, small- and medium-scale enterprises, human resources development and technology. Within this framework, UNIDO is implementing a project on the integrated development of the building materials and construction industry. This project will provide for a unit to monitor and manage technical cooperation projects, as well as related activities. In 1995, UNIDO undertook several missions aimed at developing projects, including the establishment of the Palestinian Standards Organization, the Palestinian Fashion Design and Technology Development Centre, the Biomedical Equipment Repair and Maintenance Centre and a Plastics Service and Trading Centre. UNIDO is also proposing

technical support to various ministries, the newly established Industrial Associations and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

3. Main development needs

148. Institutional building comprises one of the four primary components of the Palestinian Authority's preliminary statement on a Palestinian development strategy, presented in January 1996 at the Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People. As noted in the preliminary statement, the institutional development component aims to achieve the development of a new system of governance, and the building of local capabilities and a competent civil service necessary to implement the economic development strategy.

149. As outlined in the preliminary statement, the Palestinian Authority's institutional development priorities include strengthening the technical, financial and managerial capabilities of municipal governments; building up a legal basis for public administration; strengthening the key central institutions relating to commerce and economic management; ensuring that development projects incorporate institution-building components; ensuring extensive consultations between the central Government, local authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of an economic development strategy; creating capacity within Palestinian institutions for research, policy analysis and policy implementation; and ensuring open participation in the decision-making process by involving the public in policy formulation and the design of the development strategy. The United Nations strategy for institution-building will be geared towards responding to these priorities.

4. Integrated United Nations approach

150. Owing to the urgency of supporting the initial start-up phase of the Palestinian Authority ministries and institutions, most donor support in the area of institution-building has focused on capital investments and support for recurrent expenditures. Although technical assistance may take longer to bear fruit, it is an essential element in long-term institutional development and a key factor in developing the absorptive capacity of the Palestinian Authority to implement large-scale capital investments.

151. An important focus for the United Nations system will be in the physical infrastructure sector. The United Nations system has the necessary expertise to provide capacity-building technical assistance within selected areas of infrastructure rehabilitation, such as civil aviation, port management, housing, employment-generating public works programmes, telecommunications, hospital and school construction, and the postal service. Another important focus for the United Nations system is in supporting sustainable human and social development through the provision of technical assistance to those Palestinian institutions closely concerned with the delivery of public and social services. The relevant United Nations organizations can provide a broad range of technical assistance, including training and policy advisory support. In addition, technical experts can assist Palestinian Authority ministries in developing and implementing

sectoral gender-sensitive strategies and action plans. Assistance can also be provided to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacities of the ministries.

152. United Nations organizations may also assist ministries in establishing data systems and information bases in order to make data available to policy-makers, as well as strengthening institutional capacities in the analysis, dissemination and utilization of such data. United Nations organizations will also continue their support to non-governmental organizations and may help establish appropriate mechanisms for partnership between Palestinian Authority institutions and non-governmental organizations.

153. Another key element of the United Nations strategy for institution-building will be the continuing focus on supporting public sector management and public administration development. The aim of the United Nations system is to support and strengthen the capacities of those Palestinian Authority institutions which play a central role in public administration. The United Nations system will work with relevant Palestinian institutions to assist the Palestinian Authority in other tasks that could be included in an overall Public Administration Development Programme. The United Nations system will continue to support the Palestinian Authority in the ongoing formulation of an overall gender-sensitive training strategy and in the coordination and implementation of training programmes.

154. Priority from the United Nations system should also be given to enhancing the capacity of the Ministry of Labour to formulate, implement, coordinate and monitor a comprehensive Palestinian employment programme. Short-term employment programmes will be designed and implemented under the Palestinian employment programme to alleviate long-term structural unemployment. Support should also be provided to other institutions concerned with labour and employment issues, such as employers' and workers' organizations.

155. The United Nations system will also continue to support the capacity development of local authorities. Technical assistance components will be incorporated into large-scale capital investment projects in order to boost the capacity of local counterpart institutions and strengthen their technical, financial and managerial capabilities. The United Nations system will also support ongoing Palestinian initiatives in decentralized planning and financing for development. In addition, the United Nations will support policy dialogue between the local authorities and Palestinian Authority ministries on issues of local governance and decentralization.

156. Another critical element in ensuring the proper development of public sector institutions is to develop cohesive and equitable legal and judicial frameworks. The Palestinian Authority has stated its intention of establishing a legal reform committee in 1996, which will formulate a phased action plan for legal reform. Owing to the relatively high level of expertise in human rights, legal reform and the rule of law in Palestinian civil society, the United Nations system will support projects that will channel this expertise from the non-governmental sector to the official sector. The United Nations will promote the rationalization and reform of the legal system to conform with international standards, the independent administration of justice, promotion of the rule of

law and training of criminal justice personnel. The legal environment surrounding private sector investment should also receive priority attention.

157. Another aim of the United Nations strategy is to strengthen Palestinian capacity for aid coordination and management. Support from the United Nations can be provided to the Palestinian Authority by a whole range of aid coordination and management processes, such as the project formulation and implementation cycle, the assessment of capital and technical assistance needs, the integration of aid flows into the central planning process and the establishment of relationships with donor institutions.

158. A central objective of United Nations support for institutional development is to facilitate the progressive inclusion of the West Bank and Gaza Strip into regional and subregional spheres. The United Nations system will encourage regional networking, utilizing the established field office network of United Nations organizations throughout the Arab States, as well as the exchange of technical expertise within the region. The utilization of qualified expatriate Palestinian expertise will also be encouraged.

159. Throughout its various activities in support of institution-building, the United Nations system will support and complement the institutional development strategy currently being prepared by the World Bank. The efforts of the United Nations system will aim at shaping a coherent programme of complementary activities leading to the improvement of Palestinian institutional capacities.

F. United Nations assistance to private sector development

1. Background

160. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been estimated at $2.6 billion, compared to $5.2 billion for Jordan and $65 billion for Israel (indicative figures for 1993). By 1995, the preliminary estimated GDP had grown to $3.5 billion, according to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Finance. According to World Bank estimates, the service sector accounts for nearly 50 per cent of GDP; agriculture for less than 30 per cent; construction for 14 per cent; and industry for only 8 per cent. One of the major structural imbalances of the Palestinian economy is its low degree of industrialization when compared to other economies at similar income levels. The private sector has accounted for about 85 per cent on average of the West Bank and Gaza Strip GDP in recent years. This unusually large share of GDP reflected the absence of a well-developed public sector prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in May 1994.

161. The per capita GDP of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is estimated at $1,700, according to a report prepared by the Palestinian Authority in collaboration with IMF and the World Bank. Although recent figures are fragmented and incomplete, Palestinian Authority estimates suggest that GDP grew by 7.3 per cent in real terms in 1994 but by only 3.5 per cent in 1995. More importantly, the gross national product (GNP), which, in addition to domestic output and income, takes into account income earned outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip, notably in Israel, is estimated to have grown by less than

3 per cent in real terms during 1994, owing mainly to a loss in employment opportunities for Palestinian workers in Israel. In addition, owing to a further heavy loss in 1995, remittances earned outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip are estimated to have declined further, resulting in a fall of the order of 3 per cent of the GNP in real terms for that year. With a population growth rate of about 4 per cent per annum (excluding immigration), the West Bank and Gaza Strip per capita GNP would have declined in 1995 by nearly 7 per cent.

162. At the end of 1995, the Palestinian Authority, with the assistance of IMF, projected that during 1996, real GDP growth would increase by approximately 5 per cent and that the GNP would grow by 6.2 per cent. As a result of the extended closure that began in February 1996, the Palestinian Authority and IMF have revised these projections. Depending on the rate at which trade flows return to pre-closure levels and the possibility of labourers returning to their work in Israel, revised projections predict a loss of up to $800 million in GNP over the course of 1996.

163. Years of conflict and instability have created an inhibitive investment environment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since the 1970s, private sector investment has been constrained, partially as a result of prolonged security-related closures. Over recent years, 85 per cent of investment has gone into construction, primarily housing, one of the few secure areas of investment open to local investors. According to the World Bank, over 20 per cent of GDP has been invested in the housing sector, with less than 4 per cent invested in productive assets.

2. Assistance provided

164. UNDP has supported initiatives in the fields of management assistance, technical training, improved marketing facilities and credit and capital assistance. Several technical and capital assistance projects have been implemented in support of private sector initiatives, in particular through cooperatives (in the areas of citrus processing, vegetable packaging and fisheries). Modest assistance to business development occurred through the provision of advisory services, training and the strengthening of vocational training centres in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UNDP has also financed industrial sub-sector reviews and analyses through a non-governmental organization in Gaza.

165. During the second half of 1995, UNDP supported programme formulations in agricultural and tourism development in conjunction with FAO and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), respectively. UNDP also prepared a proposal for the provision of technical support for the planning of the proposed Nablus municipal industrial estate. Technical assistance programmes addressing priority needs, jointly identified with the Palestinian Authority, were also launched in 1996. These programmes are intended to support the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks conducive to the development of the private sector and investment in agriculture and tourism.

166. UNRWA established its ongoing income generation programme in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in 1991, in the form of three revolving loan funds, to assist

small businesses in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. The aim of the programme is to stimulate employment opportunities by promoting the creation and expansion of businesses, primarily in the manufacturing and other productive sectors of the economy. The programme, which also provides management support and training for entrepreneurs, has been successful so far in maintaining a high repayment rate. Since 1991, a total of $7.76 million has been disbursed to 1,993 businesses. The recent prolonged closure has led to an increase in demand for working capital loans but a decrease in demand for capital investment loans.

167. Within the framework of a programme of action formulated through its 1993 multidisciplinary mission, ILO initiated a project to strengthen the capacity of private contractors to carry out their business more efficiently. This project was formulated in consultation with the relevant Palestinian authorities and institutions and is scheduled to be launched in 1996. ILO has also developed a project to assist the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in enhancing their services to small enterprises. Technical advisory services were also provided by ILO to formulate a project for establishing a national small business council. Other activities undertaken by ILO include assistance in developing a labour code, a project designed to build the capacity of the Palestinian Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and a programme for strengthening workers' organizations. ILO also fielded technical advisory missions in vocational training, which led to the formulation of a project proposal to upgrade facilities and staff, as well as modernize programmes at vocational training centres.

168. UNCTAD has carried out a number of studies on issues facing the Palestinian economy. Within the framework of its programme of technical cooperation activities in support of Palestinian trade, finance and related services, and in response to the request of the Palestinian Authority for urgent technical assistance, a number of technical cooperation activities were carried out during 1995 and the first quarter of 1996. UNCTAD has developed proposals for follow-up action in the areas of procurement of strategic consumer commodities and trade efficiency and facilitation, and for the encouragement of private investment law and the establishment and operation of export processing zones. A programme of follow-up activities is also being prepared for the reorientation of the insurance sector.

169. In the period 1993-1994, ITC carried out a number of programming missions, with the aim of assessing potential and needs in the foreign trade sector and formulating appropriate technical cooperation projects. Based on the findings and recommendations of these missions, ITC developed an integrated project aimed at assisting the Palestinian export community by strengthening the Palestinian Trade Promotion Organization. ITC also carried out a feasibility study for the development of exports of selected high-value, fresh-cut flowers. Based on that study, a technical cooperation project aimed at assisting agricultural cooperatives, growers and marketing enterprises, has been developed. ITC has also prepared a proposal for assisting in the establishment of industrial zones in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

170. UNIDO has had a long involvement in assisting industrial development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UNIDO has developed its programming strategy for

services to the Palestinian people which calls for the provision of technical assistance in the areas of private sector development for industry, human resources development, small- and medium-sized enterprises and advanced technologies. Within this framework, in 1995, UNIDO implemented training activities and formulation missions aimed at developing full-fledged programmes in priority areas.

171. FAO and ESCWA undertook several joint agricultural sector studies in 1993 and 1994. For 1996, FAO has formulated projects for capacity-building in agricultural policy analysis and planning, and agro-processing. ESCWA has also addressed the need to develop entrepreneurship through the training of trainers and potential entrepreneurs. In 1995, ESCWA developed further proposals for the establishment of pilot business and technology incubation centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

3. Main development needs

172. In its overall development strategy, the Palestinian Authority has identified the private sector as the principal engine for growth, development and employment generation. The Palestinian Authority's strategy for private sector development has three broad thrusts: the creation of an enabling environment and basic infrastructure for industry, agriculture and tourism; promotion of medium-term lending, particularly for small business and for farming activities; and promotion of private sector participation in infrastructure development.

173. The strategy for the development of the industrial sector calls for a distinction to be made between the needs of large- and medium-scale enterprises, which are primarily export-oriented, and the needs of small-scale and micro-enterprises, which account for over 90 per cent of industrial employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For large- and medium-scale enterprises, the strategy emphasizes the establishment of industrial estates, an investment promotion programme, facilities for political risk insurance, an export development programme, and clarification and modernization of the legal and regulatory framework. For small-scale and micro-enterprises, the strategy calls for the development of municipal industrial complexes, incubator and business support services, and the promotion of leasing, venture capital and small credit schemes.

174. The revival of the agricultural sector also features prominently in the Palestinian Authority's strategy for private sector development. The major features of the strategy are to support private sector farming activities through improved legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks, to enhance the efficiency of traditional and domestic market-oriented agriculture, to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of intensive and export-oriented agriculture and to improve access to regional and international markets.

175. Tourism development can also contribute to private sector development. The West Bank and Gaza Strip, endowed with unique cultural and historical assets, have the potential to become major tourist destinations. The Palestinian Authority's strategy is to promote and market the area as a tourism destination

and to integrate the area into global marketing systems; to assist in the development of tourism and related industries; and to improve training and human resources development.

176. However, there still exist constraints to the development of the private sector in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that constitute obstacles to the implementation of the Palestinian Authority's strategy. These include the volatile security environment; the lack of clear and predictable legal, regulatory and administrative frameworks; and, most importantly, the frequent closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, severely affecting access to supplies, capital and the labour market in Israel and preventing the transfer of Palestinian produce, products and services.

4. Integrated United Nations approach

177. United Nations initiatives have been developed in light of the Palestinian Authority's strategies and priorities, and implementing agencies will act in partnership with specialized institutions. United Nations assistance to private sector development will complement World Bank efforts, the main aim of which is the establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks for private sector development and, the development of border and local industrial estates. The United Nations will implement this strategy primarily through the provision of specialized advisory services, technical assistance and training to private, public and semi-public entities. Special attention will be given to the environmental soundness of the proposed development models; the creation of local capacities at the public and private sector levels which can, in the future, sustain development efforts and momentum; the utilization, whenever available, of local Palestinian capacities; and the incorporation of women and marginalized groups in mainstream economic development.

178. Human resources development should be strengthened to support emerging industries in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to respond effectively to the challenges of industrial development. The United Nations can assist in the formulation of policies and strategies for human resources development, based on an analysis of existing capacities and requirements, and assist institutions in providing technical, managerial and entrepreneurial training. UNIDO will develop a series of projects aimed at establishing and strengthening those institutions which specialize in industrial and vocational training.

179. The development of the labour market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is being addressed through ongoing ILO projects aimed at improving the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Labour. ILO has already carried out some training activities and assisted the vocational training system, and its assistance will be further strengthened to support the authorities to respond better to labour market needs. Work on the preparation of labour statistics is already under way, and ILO will be formulating further interventions to develop reliable labour statistics to help monitor employment programmes and policies undertaken through the Palestinian employment programme. Utilizing its unique tripartite mandate, ILO will assist Palestinian institutions to set-up effective structures and mechanisms to facilitate social dialogue, and design and implement projects aimed at assisting both employers and trade unions. ILO will

also continue to assist the Ministry of Labour in establishing a labour code for the proper functioning of the private sector.

180. ITC interventions in the foreign trade sector will include advice to the Palestinian Authority on appropriate strategies and the establishment of an institutional infrastructure for trade development and promotion. ITC will also provide technical assistance in the field of private sector investment, and UNDP will support the Palestinian Authority in establishing a legal and regulatory framework conducive to such investment, particularly foreign direct investment. UNIDO will provide training in the area of investment promotion and will assist Palestinian entrepreneurs in identifying foreign investors for joint venture projects.

181. On the basis of two studies on the development and expansion of the Palestinian economy, UNCTAD will expand its current programme of technical cooperation. In addition, UNCTAD will endeavour to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks of the private sector.

182. Entrepreneurship and small business development is an important area for private sector development and employment generation. The United Nations system will continue to implement a plan of action to develop a conducive environment for entrepreneurship and self employment. ESCWA has formulated project proposals for the establishment of business and technology incubators to nurture new manufacturing start-ups, an area which UNDP is also ready to support. UNIDO and ILO are proposing to strengthen the capacities of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. UNIDO is also proposing to provide support for the development of small- and medium-scale industrial enterprises. ILO will launch a project aimed at revitalizing the small business sector and is also proposing to provide support for the establishment of a Palestinian small business council. UNRWA intends to expand its training programmes to support potential entrepreneurs, particularly women's and social groups affected by unemployment. UNESCO will further develop its programme for the promotion of handicrafts, the main beneficiaries of which are women. UNV will provide short-term advisory services through UNITAR to assist private enterprises in the areas of management, strategic planning, etc. UNIFEM is planning to carry out exploratory activities for the development of a programme for the economic empowerment of women, while the Department for Development Support and Management Services is preparing to assist small business promotion.

183. UNIDO is proposing interventions aimed at facilitating access by enterprises to industrial support services, including support for the establishment of a Palestinian standards organization and support for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in the preparation of an industrial census. UNDP intends to expand its participation in the development of industrial zones in close cooperation with the World Bank and utilizing the specialized services of UNCTAD. In this context, UNDP will finance feasibility studies to identify off-site infrastructural requirements and may undertake the required infrastructural construction.

184. The development of tourism is potentially a major area of private sector growth. UNDP will, in complementarity with UNESCO activities in this sector, call upon the technical expertise of WTO to strengthen tourism institutions, in

particular the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The proposed focus will be the establishment of a legal, institutional and financial environment conducive to private sector investment in the tourism sector, and the promotion of Palestinian cultural heritage. UNV will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities through the provision of specialists.

185. Concerning agriculture, United Nations assistance will follow a multi-track approach aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority for agricultural development; supporting sustainable natural resources management policies and practices; revitalizing support services to agricultural entrepreneurs; developing the sector's human resources and encouraging the competitiveness of agricultural products; and supporting the rehabilitation of essential rural physical infrastructures.

186. On the basis of an initial phase launched in 1996, UNDP, utilizing the technical expertise of FAO, is proposing to expand its support to the Ministry of Agriculture through a project aimed at enhancing the institutional, managerial and technical capabilities of the Ministry in the area of policy analysis and planning. In order to enhance agricultural production through the spread of technologies, genotypes and information to farmers, UNDP is formulating a project aimed at supporting the Palestinian Authority in defining and implementing appropriate and responsive policies and strategies for applied research and demand-driven extension. Several studies carried out by FAO in recent years have targeted rehabilitation needs in the fisheries sector and veterinary services, as well as the rehabilitation of artesian wells, springs and related irrigation canals. In order to ensure that Palestinian agricultural products conform to international standards, UNDP has formulated an action programme for the testing and control of agricultural produce for pesticide residues.

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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the General Assembly stated its deep concern about the suffering of the victims of disasters and emergency situations, the loss in human lives, the flow of refugees, the mass displacement of people and the material destruction, and set forth a number of guiding principles and measures to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system.

2. Four years later, in its resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, the Economic and Social Council recognized the need to review and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance, and requested the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, to submit, at a date to be determined by the Council at its substantive session of 1996, a comprehensive and analytical report, including options, proposals and recommendations for a review and strengthening of all aspects of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance.

3. The present report provides updates on both the progress achieved thus far in responding to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 and on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/182. Section II contains observations on the environment in which humanitarian assistance is likely to be required and provided in the coming years. Section III, on the follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56, provides a brief overview of the substantive discussions on that resolution which have been held by the governing bodies of relevant United Nations organizations, highlighting issues of system-wide concern. As requested in resolution 1995/56, United Nations organizations will include, within their own reports to the Council, a more detailed account of the deliberations of their governing boards. Section III also deals with the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in the follow-up process, and summarizes the inter-agency consultations now under way in seven key areas of systemic concern that were identified during inter-agency meetings and through analysis of the discussions in the organizations' governing boards.

4. Section IV reports on the implementation by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of General Assembly resolution 46/182. As appropriate, earlier sections also cover a number of issues pertaining to that resolution. The focus in that section is therefore on activities specific to the Department both in complex emergencies and in natural disasters and environmental emergencies. The report concludes with observations on challenges facing the United Nations humanitarian system and the forthcoming review by the Economic and Social Council of the capacity of the system.

II. THE CONTEXT OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

5. If present trends continue, humanitarian assistance in the coming decade is likely to be provided in an increasingly complex environment - one of internal conflicts and other situations where the international community is called upon to engage in peacemaking, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building efforts, to stabilize threatened societies, and to assist in rebuilding war-torn communities. The humanitarian community may also find itself serving more and more as a safety net for fragile societies.

6. To address both the needs of affected peoples and the root causes of disasters and crises, the humanitarian community would benefit from a better understanding of the context in which humanitarian assistance will be provided in the future. Humanitarian organizations will need to determine, in that context, the extent to which they need to act as part of a far broader and more proactive global network. The humanitarian community will have to consider how it will relate in the future to global economic and social adjustments, to environmental and ecological concerns, and to human rights.

7. A more in-depth and elaborate examination of these issues is likely to form part of the comprehensive review requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1995/56. As a first step, this section reviews certain issues that are likely to influence the requirements for humanitarian assistance in the future. These issues in turn suggest the type of humanitarian responsibilities that may be faced in the future, and highlight some important challenges with which the humanitarian community must contend today.

8. Poverty increases vulnerability to both natural disasters and man-made emergencies, and widening economic and social disparities can generate tensions that in turn could lead to conflict. Despite some positive developments - decreases in infant mortality, increases in education, prolonged life expectancy, and rapid economic growth and development in many countries in Asia and Latin America - there are still 1.3 billion people living in poverty and more than 800 million people suffering from hunger in the developing world. 1/ The disparity between the rich and poor is growing: between 1960 and 1991 the share of the world income of countries with the poorest 20 per cent of the world's population fell from 4.9 per cent to 3.6 per cent. 2/

9. If current trends persist, the prospects for many of the least developed countries are discouraging. There is a danger that the poorest and least developed countries will continue to experience little or negative growth, and will become further marginalized from the world economy. 3/ Debt burdens seem likely to continue to cripple the economies of the least developed countries; 4/ already, Africa's external debt burden now equals 83 per cent of the continent's GNP. 5/ Such debt levels frighten away foreign investment and hinder domestic production. Increasingly, official development assistance (ODA) to many countries is targeted for debt repayment rather than development, and the terms of trade for primary commodities are unlikely to improve significantly. 6/

10. Poverty often leads to environmental degradation; and degradation and poverty combined further increase vulnerability. As cultivation is extended to low-lying plains or drought-prone lands, vulnerability to natural disasters

increases. The growing shortages, and worsening quality, of fresh water increases health risks, and deforestation compounds these problems through its acceleration of land and water degradation. In urban areas, it is the poor who most often are forced to live in dense squatter settlements characterized by unsanitary conditions, or near hazardous industrial plants.

11. The future will demonstrate even more clearly that crises and disasters are not aberrant phenomena but, on the contrary, reflections of how the international community and national societies organize themselves and allocate their resources. Poverty not only leaves populations vulnerable to the immediate effects of disaster and conflict, and under-equipped to rebuild their livelihoods, but may undermine the very foundations of society and thus exacerbate the risk of crisis.

12. In some cases, a combination of increasing poverty, deepening social conflicts and weak institutions of governance may threaten the capacity of the State to provide security and basic social services. Rapid urbanization, 7/ often beyond the control of authorities, may contribute to the disintegration of community bonds and social safety nets. Perceived ethnic and other differences may be exploited, and a cycle of hatred and violence initiated.

13. Poverty, increasing vulnerability, and the uncertain evolution of some States will continue to result in acute humanitarian needs. Globalization magnifies the impact of instability and conflict upon international peace and security. No longer can the ramifications of conflict be confined within fixed borders. The former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region of Africa are but two examples where refugees, small arms and fighting units crossed borders often enough and in sufficient numbers to threaten the stability of neighbouring States. The financial, political, and security burdens borne by neighbouring States hosting asylum-seekers will continue to be enormous. 8/ Not only the number of asylum-seekers may increase, but also the number of internally displaced, so that there is likely to be an increasing need for humanitarian assistance throughout the world.

14. The changing political and economic environment has diminished the strategic importance of many States in the eyes of donor countries, resulting in the economic and political marginalization of some fragile States. These changing priorities, compounded by demands in donor countries to address domestic requirements, may also have been partially responsible for diminishing ODA, in real terms, over the past few years. 9/ Overall ODA funds have stagnated and, in the case of some large donors, decreased dramatically, despite general acknowledgement that assistance targeted at sustainable and participatory development may help prevent and address the underlying causes of complex crises.

15. At the same time, despite the likelihood of sustained need for humanitarian assistance, the amount of funding available from traditional donor States, having jumped dramatically in the early 1990s, appears to be levelling out and may even be decreasing. In 1995, donor Governments met only 70 per cent of the funds requested in United Nations consolidated appeals for humanitarian emergencies, down from 76 per cent in 1994.

16. Resource mobilization is most successful for the high-profile crises such as Rwanda (92 per cent of the consolidated appeal was funded) or the former Yugoslavia (90 per cent); less is available for protracted complex crises such as those in Afghanistan (33 per cent) and Somalia (30 per cent) (figures are based on appeals launched in 1995). Likewise, funding for essential rehabilitation and reconstruction activities is sometimes scarce because public interest has waned, and rehabilitation requirements fall between the mandates of relief and development for many donors.

17. Also of immediate concern are the significant reductions occurring in the provision of food assistance. Food aid contributions for both development and emergencies have declined dramatically in recent years - cereal contributions dropped from 15 million metric tons in 1992/93 to only 8 million metric tons in 1994/95. 10/ The reasons for this decline include both the scarcity of food surpluses throughout the world (food stocks are nearing an all-time low), in part driven by the liberalization of agricultural trade, and the commensurate increase in food prices (less food can be purchased with the same amount of donated funds), as well as the stagnation in ODA allocations.

18. Internal conflicts, already a noticeable feature of the 1990s, are likely to continue. Although the objectives of armed groups differ, violence is consistently directed against civilians and their means of subsistence. Today, 90 per cent of victims of conflict are non-combatants, mostly women and children. The violence and the targeting of civilians are changing the demands made upon the humanitarian community. Psycho-social rehabilitation for children, rebuilding of destroyed educational facilities, and re-equipping people with the tools necessary to start again are now all necessary components of many humanitarian programmes. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot address the full scope of conflict-related problems - the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance can often depend on adequate arrangements for the protection of affected populations.

19. The humanitarian community will continue to face some of its most serious challenges in conflict settings. The military nature of conflict will often mean that humanitarian assistance will not be perceived as neutral, because humanitarian assistance can be manipulated or diverted to further a warring party's military objectives. The risks and complexities faced by relief workers are intensified by the indiscriminate availability and use of arms and landmines, and by the frequent splintering of warring parties themselves. These issues make negotiations for relief access to affected populations extremely problematic. There is also increasing evidence of violence targeted against humanitarian aid providers.

20. Humanitarian assistance helps victims but can rarely prevent victimization; and it can be provided in a manner that reinforces local capacity and perhaps avoids replicating past inequities. However, humanitarian assistance must be part of an integrated response; it is no substitute for other international activities, political, military or developmental, that address conflict and its root causes.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1995/56: REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

21. Ultimately, the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to humanitarian emergencies depends upon how well each United Nations agency works, and works with and complements the other organizations within the system. For the system to attain the capacity to respond as effectively, efficiently and rapidly as is optimal, the sum must be more than its parts. With this in mind, the Economic and Social Council requested both a comprehensive report on the United Nations humanitarian assistance system and reviews by the governing bodies of each constituent part of the United Nations system.

A. Follow-up by United Nations organizations to resolution 1995/56

22. In paragraph 2 (b) of its resolution 1995/56, the Economic and Social Council urged the governing bodies of relevant organizations of the United Nations system to review, during the period from 1995 to 1997, issues concerning the role and operational responsibilities, as well as the operative and financial capacities, of their respective organizations to respond, within their mandates, in the context of broad and comprehensive humanitarian programmes.

23. In response, substantive discussions on Council resolution 1995/56 have been held during 1996 in the Executive Boards and Committees of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The resolution was reported to the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in October 1995, with FAO follow-up to be considered at the next FAO Council session in October 1996. In all cases, the relevant organizations have informed their boards of the process they propose to follow in addressing the issues raised in the resolution, and have affirmed their commitment to the process established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for ensuring an overall coherent response to the resolution. Member States have welcomed the response of agencies and generally encouraged them to continue their participation in the Inter-Agency Task Force led by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on follow-up to the Council resolution.

24. As was foreseen in the Council's resolution, conclusions on the issues raised therein are not necessarily anticipated in 1996, and therefore discussions of some aspects have been of a preliminary nature. For instance, UNICEF is undergoing a fundamental review of its emergency role, both strategic and operational proposals being put to its Board in 1996 and 1997. Nevertheless, it is already apparent that the identification of seven key systemic issues by the Inter-Agency Task Force (see sect. III.C) relates very precisely to the concerns of organizations and Member States in their governing boards.

25. Three issues have attracted particular attention and debate. The first concerns the links between relief operations and rehabilitation and development

activities. In a UNICEF document on emergency operations, submitted to its Executive Board in January 1996, attention was drawn to the particular contribution UNICEF could make to emergency operations given its strength in the development process and its continuing field presence. This was noted and welcomed by Executive Board members, and UNICEF will address further the linkage between relief and development in a forthcoming paper for its Executive Board. UNICEF is strongly committed to the idea that capacity-building is essential at all stages of an emergency, even at the initial "survival" stage.

26. The focus of debate in the Standing Committee of UNHCR in April was on the Office's role in countries of origin, particular attention being paid to the need to strengthen links with development organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions. UNHCR also highlighted to the Committee the continuing importance of its Quick Impact Projects.

27. The relationship between relief and development activities has for some time been recognized as one which is not necessarily sequential. Relief and development activities proceed often at the same time, each therefore having an impact upon the other. Recognition of the limitations of the paradigm of a linear continuum was reflected in recent debates in governing boards and this recognition has given rise to the need to review the funding arrangements for relief and development activities, to ensure that there is clarity on the respective roles of consolidated appeals, round tables and consultative groups. This question is being addressed by the Working Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The Standing Committee has also decided to examine possible modalities for associating the World Bank with its work.

28. The United Nations Development Programme, in recognition of the need for improved links between relief and development activities, has proposed a number of approaches in papers presented to its Executive Board in May 1996. These include operational guidelines for the use of funds for successor programming arrangements and, in particular, for the use of funds for countries in special development circumstances. These guidelines provide the framework for the utilization of UNDP core funds to provide support, in collaboration with relevant partners, to development efforts in response to crisis, including activities of a preventative and curative nature, and to contribute to meeting the immediate needs of countries experiencing sudden-onset disasters and emergencies. At the same time, the guidelines provide for a contribution of UNDP to the formulation of a strategic framework for international and national action, providing for a holistic approach to the recovery needs of countries facing crisis. The details of implementation of these new arrangements have yet to be worked out and discussion with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, for example, will need to take place to ensure an accountable and clear relationship between relief and development organizations. An analysis of these arrangements will be carried out in time for the report to the Economic and Social Council in 1997.

29. The UNDP Executive Board also discussed the role of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in tackling root causes of conflict and encouraged UNV to

intensify participation in the full spectrum of development, humanitarian and peace activities of the United Nations system and its related organizations.

30. The second major issue is the provision of assistance and protection to internally displaced persons. This is a subject of reference in all papers presented to governing boards, with a consensus that much remains to be done to clarify external institutional responsibilities, within the context of the sovereign Government's capacity to respond to these needs. UNHCR has restated its willingness to respond to requests from the Secretary-General to provide assistance. While some members of its Executive Committee would like UNHCR to play a more active role regarding internally displaced persons, other members have taken a cautious line, urging UNHCR not to extend itself beyond its "ceiling of effectiveness", a point accepted by UNHCR. WFP has proposed that the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, might consider, in specific circumstances, the designation of a "lead operational agency" for these responsibilities. UNDP has stated that it sees its role as providing assistance in the prevention and resettlement phases; the UNDP Governing Council has urged UNDP, jointly with UNHCR, to carry out activities related to providing development assistance to displaced populations. The responsibilities of UNICEF for assistance and protection to internally displaced persons are being elaborated and will inevitably draw on the fact that most internally displaced persons are women and children.

31. Within the United Nations system, the Emergency Relief Coordinator is the entry point for this matter. To assist the Coordinator in discharging these responsibilities an Inter-Agency Task Force on internally displaced persons was established in 1995. The work of this Task Force has now been formally linked by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 as the forum for inter-agency consultations on this key systemic issue. It is anticipated that the Standing Committee will be able to submit its recommendations to the Council on the division of responsibilities, among United Nations organizations, for addressing both assistance to and the protection needs of internally displaced persons.

32. The third major issue is coordination in complex emergencies. This is one of the seven systemic issues identified by the Inter-Agency Task Force in the follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56. Governing bodies placed strong emphasis on the need for agencies to support the central coordination role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In January 1996, the Standing Committee of UNHCR confirmed its view that coordination at the field level in complex emergencies could best be managed through the designation of a lead agency by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. This aspect of coordination is to be addressed, with more detailed analysis, in inter-agency consultations.

33. A second aspect of coordination in complex emergencies which has received some attention is the necessity of operational "predictability" within the United Nations humanitarian system. For instance, were WFP to take on a larger logistics role in the transport of non-food items, it would have to be clear that these services would be dependably provided in any complex emergency even if circumstances did not require a major WFP presence for food provision.

Similarly, UNICEF's mandate gives it an obligation to provide assistance and protection for women and children, and this responsibility is reflected in the paper it submitted in January to its Executive Board. The specific responsibilities of UNICEF for needs assessment and the rehabilitation of essential social service networks, as well as for advocacy on child issues, must be further defined in operational contexts with its partners, to ensure efficient complementarity. "Predictability" was also raised at the January meeting of the Standing Committee of UNHCR.

34. It is within the framework of memoranda of understanding that the question of predictability will be resolved, as it is in such documents that accountability for services will be identified, and the respective roles and responsibilities of relief and development actors delineated. Agencies continue to progress in the development of memoranda of understanding - an issue also raised in Council resolution 1995/56. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between UNICEF and UNHCR. Work is in progress on similar arrangements between UNICEF and, respectively, WFP, WHO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Cooperative arrangements are under discussion between UNHCR and, respectively, the World Bank, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as between WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and between ICRC and UNICEF. UNHCR, in addition to its memorandum of understanding with WFP (signed in 1991), has signed memoranda with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Memoranda of understanding with non-governmental organizations are also being developed: UNICEF is developing a generic format, while WFP has signed (in 1995) a first memorandum with Catholic Relief Services. Finally, the importance of the link between relief and development agencies argues strongly the case for the elaboration of memoranda of understanding between UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system, and this is being pursued by UNDP. Clearly, with this large number of memoranda of understanding being elaborated and already signed it is important to ensure that bilateral memoranda add up to a coherent humanitarian response system.

35. A third aspect of coordination has been the establishment of stand-by arrangements with external assets to provide for increased emergency response at times of special need. In addition to the recent strengthening of its emergency response capacities, UNHCR has developed a programme of "service packages" which was referred to in its Standing Committee in January 1996. These packages are contractual arrangements between UNHCR and Governments which have, principally, military and civil defence assets which could be called on at times when the emergency response capacity of UNHCR requires reinforcement. Likewise, WFP has developed eight logistics service packages. In addition, UNICEF is in the process of developing similar arrangements to supplement its recently created Rapid Response Team and its improved emergency stockpile. To ensure that the use of these external assets is managed in the most effective manner, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has established a Military and Civil Defence Unit as a service to agencies, donors of assets, and recipient Governments (see sect. IV.A). The Department and UNV have also undertaken to develop the White Helmets Initiative, which aims to encourage the use of newly created national volunteer corps to support relief and recovery efforts. Pilot UNV/White Helmets

Initiative projects are already being tried in several countries, such as Haiti, Lebanon and Rwanda.

36. In the context of the ongoing efforts by United Nations organizations to strengthen capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies, Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 is having a considerable impact on the way in which organizations and bodies plan their response to emergency operations, and this is reflected in the attention paid to the resolution in the deliberations of governing boards. Arrangements have been put into place to follow up on the issues raised in the resolution, with a view to submitting comprehensive reports to the Council in 1997. In all cases, the agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system are approaching the issues raised in a manner which provides for effective debate at the level of governing boards and with a view to submitting views and recommendations to the Council for the review of the capacity of the system. Key systemic issues have been identified and are being addressed in a collaborative manner by the relevant organizations, and governing boards are being kept informed about the links between their debates and those taking place in other forums.

B. Role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

37. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Working Group have served as a key tool for inter-agency coordination on a variety of pressing humanitarian issues, including the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. In 1995, the inter-agency mechanism provided a forum for agencies to coordinate work on specific emergency operations, and to develop common system-wide positions on landmine issues and on the utilization of military and civil defence assets for humanitarian assistance. In the first half of 1996, the Standing Committee addressed the follow-up to the multi-donor evaluation study on Rwanda, the humanitarian impact of sanctions, the consolidated appeals process and resource mobilization.

38. The Standing Committee and its Working Group act as a clearing-house for all work undertaken as follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56. This approach encourages consistency in the dialogues between agencies, their governing bodies, and Member States, as well as on the measures being taken to address issues raised in the resolution.

39. In its resolution 1995/56, the Council requested the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to convene regular, informal and open information meetings with Member States, observer States and relevant intergovernmental and other organizations on the review of the issues so as to ensure that they are coherently addressed and appropriately reflected in the report of the Secretary-General. To fulfil this request, the Department has briefed Member States on the follow-up to the resolution and solicited their comments and observations.

C. Capacity restraints and limitations of the United Nations humanitarian system

40. Deliberations during the inter-agency sessions on the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 focused primarily on ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach. Through inter-agency discussions and a review of agency deliberations, seven key issues of a systemic nature which would benefit from further inter-agency consultations were identified: coordination, resource mobilization, relief and development, staff development, monitoring and evaluation, strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms, and internally displaced persons.

41. Members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee concluded that the task of reviewing these issues and recommending improved practices and methods would best be further pursued in a series of informal consultations. Proposals emanating from these consultations will be submitted to the Standing Committee or its Working Group with a view to making recommendations to the Economic and Social Council in 1997. The following section presents the parameters of debate and discussion in each of the substantive areas. In six of seven areas an inter-agency sub-working group has been formed to facilitate inter-agency consultations.

1. Coordination

42. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is the entity within the United Nations whose main purpose is to ensure timely, coherent and coordinated humanitarian responses by the international community to disasters and complex crises. It is particularly charged with ensuring the effective coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance, and acting as a facilitator with respect to international organizations and non-governmental organizations. The tools created to promote coordination, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the consolidated appeals process, the complex emergency training initiative, the disaster management training programme and the secondment of personnel to other United Nations bodies, have improved significantly, but a number of issues remain to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination.

43. An inter-agency sub-working group on coordination will review the current situation regarding options for field coordination. The sub-working group will examine a number of distinct examples of existing field coordination mechanisms, and identify what lessons can be learned for improved practice in different emergency settings. From these lessons it is anticipated that principles and criteria which should be the underlying objectives of the exercise of coordination will become clear: principles such as impartiality, neutrality, transparency and accountability, and criteria such as responsiveness, programme integrity, adaptability and flexibility. In turn, these standards would be used to provide a more rational basis for the establishment of coordination mechanisms appropriate for each unique emergency situation.

44. With these principles as a basis, a number of issues will be addressed. Appropriate coordination mechanisms during and between different phases of

complex emergencies (relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, development) must be defined. Definition of the scope and form of coordination mechanisms appropriate in demobilization, reintegration and mine action programmes will be undertaken. The identification of the multiple actors (United Nations, bilaterals, multilaterals, donors, non-governmental organizations, government authorities, beneficiaries, etc.) and multiple levels (international, regional, national, local) engaged in humanitarian assistance response and the appropriate coordination mechanisms for these complex interactions will be addressed. In addition, the refinement of previously established coordination tools and decision-making processes and procedures at the Headquarters, regional and in-country levels will continue.

2. Resource mobilization

45. Against a backdrop of a growing number of emergencies, escalating relief requirements and scarce donor resources, there is an urgent need to ensure that effective and coordinated mechanisms for the mobilization of resources are in place and that there is enhanced accountability in the utilization of contributions received. The sub-working group on resource mobilization has been established to facilitate inter-agency consultations on key areas where systemic limitations or variations in capacity may exist.

46. At the meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in April 1996, seven priority areas were identified for consideration by the sub-working group on resource mobilization. These include the process for prioritization of funding requirements, the utilization of "flash appeals" to ensure timely response to critical first phase emergency needs, the relationship among various funding mechanisms, and ways to enhance advocacy and public information strategies with a focus on the resources necessary for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

47. In its review of the relationship of existing resource mobilization mechanisms such as the consolidated appeal, the round table and consultative groups, the sub-working group should consider how best to ensure an effective resource mobilization strategy for the range of relief, recovery and rehabilitation activities essential to the provision of emergency and post-conflict assistance. These issues will be reviewed in close collaboration with the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions which is currently examining the key elements and resource implications of a post-conflict recovery strategy and framework.

48. The sub-working group will consider current procedures for reporting on programme implementation and financial requirements. It will formulate recommendations on how to strengthen monitoring, analysis and provision of information on achievements and difficulties experienced, drawing particular attention to strategic funding shortfalls which may limit the implementation or effectiveness of priority activities. Another area for consideration is how to enhance the availability of information on global humanitarian assistance being provided by the international community, through both United Nations and non-United Nations channels. The sub-working group will prepare recommendations on how better to reflect the value of assistance provided through bilateral, non-governmental and other organizations, the costing of military and civil

defence assets in support of humanitarian operations and the value of service packages.

3. Relief and development

49. Increasing emphasis is being placed on ways in which, in the immediate aftermath of humanitarian and political crises, post-conflict recovery programmes that link relief and development can support peace processes by addressing the immediate needs of conflict-affected societies. At the same time, there are situations, though not conflict induced, where extensive humanitarian assistance is required while at the same time there is a vital need to pursue development.

50. Significant efforts are being made, by the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Standing Committee among others, to establish closer working relations between the Bretton Woods institutions and other humanitarian and development agencies within the United Nations system. In addition, increased integration of relief and development activities requires the donor community to suggest ways in which the normally highly compartmentalized funds for relief and development can themselves be linked.

4. Staff development

51. In the area of human resource development, many agencies recognize the need for a broader human resources management policy and strategy. Renewed impetus is given to staff development in view of its crucial role in achieving the organization's objectives. There is general recognition of the need for the development of management capacities, and strategic thinking as an essential tool of managerial capacity.

52. In the humanitarian field, a human resources development strategy requires a package of interconnected measures including training. The United Nations staff involved in humanitarian activities are compelled to strengthen their capacity to deal with a constantly changing environment. Specific agencies generally have staff development programmes reflecting agency priorities and a specific organizational perspective. There is however also a critical need for a more cohesive approach to human resource development, in general, and training at the United Nations system level, in particular, in order to improve collective performance.

53. The sub-working group on staff development took into account work related to human resource development currently under way in the Administrative Committee on Coordination and in other inter-agency forums. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP are jointly managing the disaster management training programme. In addition, the United Nations Staff College is being launched at the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization at Turin, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is facilitating the complex emergency training initiative. In the light of these ongoing programmes, the sub-working group is now identifying non-training issues related to staff development.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

54. The need to improve the effectiveness, transparency and accountability, to victims and donors, of emergency relief operations has been widely recognized by Governments and relief agencies. Member States are increasingly concerned with issues related to cost-effectiveness and the impact of humanitarian assistance, as evidenced by the recent multi-donor study on Rwanda.

55. The United Nations humanitarian agencies have well-established monitoring and evaluation units which provide recommendations and feedback aimed at improving the quality of their activities. Such activities however tend to be agency-specific and little effort so far has gone into joint or inter-agency monitoring or evaluation mechanisms which could examine the interface between agency-specific activities and the overall direction of a multi-agency humanitarian programme. The consequence is that coherent coordination of the programme, and accountability, is more difficult.

56. The sub-working group on monitoring and evaluation has agreed that a first priority is to study one or more large-scale humanitarian programmes in order to recommend a practical system for the monitoring of overall United Nations humanitarian assistance in emergency situations. Such recommendations would build on existing agency-specific monitoring activities, and identify a simple and practical system for monitoring those aspects of a multi-agency humanitarian programme that are relevant to its overall coordination and direction. Subsequently, work will be initiated on the development of joint evaluation methodologies and procedures, taking into account existing United Nations concepts and practices, and in close consultation with the different United Nations committees working on the issue of monitoring and evaluation guidelines, such as Joint Consultative Group on Policy and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions.

6. Strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms

57. Complex crises tend to have structural and deep-rooted causes which have inhibited or undermined the ability of different groups to participate fully in the socio-economic and political development of their society. Those who are most vulnerable to crises are almost invariably those who are already marginalized and least able to shape events which impact on their ability to survive. Crises are self-evidently destructive in human and financial terms. They exact a heavy toll on physical infrastructure, natural assets, and people's ability to maintain their usual means of livelihood. Crises also tend to inflict serious damage on the social fabric which binds societies together.

58. It is increasingly clear that a major determinant in the overall effectiveness of humanitarian action is the extent to which it either strengthens or erodes the inherent capacity and coping mechanisms of affected communities. Building indigenous institutional capacity to respond to relief requirements is not sufficient; there also needs to be a thorough understanding of the overall capacities and coping mechanisms of the communities in need of assistance and the larger factors which shape their environment.

59. Some progress has been made in developing tools and procedures to identify those who are most vulnerable, to assess the needs, and to define strategies which strengthen the resources of communities threatened by crisis. For instance, WFP has initiated a programme to strengthen local capacities for disaster mitigation, which includes field-level vulnerability analyses. None the less, in many settings, particularly in large-scale, sudden and fast-paced population movements, humanitarian agencies face major challenges in ensuring that their activities do not undermine capacities or generate dependency.

60. After preliminary consultations, the sub-working group on local capacity and coping mechanisms will commence a review of the concepts, operational definitions and current practices throughout the different phases of a crisis. Once this has been completed, the most appropriate means of assessing the impact of humanitarian action on local capacity and coping mechanisms will be determined. On the basis of these findings, the sub-working group will examine the extent to which the different approaches add up to a coherent strategy necessary to reinforce capacity and coping mechanisms in a meaningful and integrated fashion, and then will identify additional effective practices and procedures.

7. Internally displaced persons

61. Concerns about how the system as a whole addresses internally displaced persons in terms of assistance and protection are being reviewed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on internally displaced persons which was created to support the Emergency Relief Coordinator in his/her role as reference point on the question within the United Nations. There is a clear need for additional definition of the institutional responsibilities of agencies within the United Nations system. UNHCR, despite having considerable activities for internally displaced persons, relates to these populations as an extension of its general mandate and not as a population group of specific mandated concern. UNICEF and WFP act in response to their respective mandates on women and children and food provision, whenever and wherever people are vulnerable, whether they be refugees, displaced or resident populations.

62. Additional clarity is needed regarding the activities of individual United Nations organizations vis-à-vis other United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian agencies, and within the context of the capacity of the sovereign Government to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons. In a humanitarian emergency, the specific assistance and protection needs of those persons, and the ability of the international community to address them, are often quite distinct from those of refugees, returnees, or even needy residents. As the humanitarian emergency phase winds down and reintegration becomes a possibility, there are also special requirements, both normative and substantive, for addressing the needs of internally displaced persons. In the coming year, the Task Force will draw attention both to the medium-term and long-term policy issues, and to the review of operational arrangements related to country-specific situations of displacement.

IV. DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS: IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/182

63. Since its creation in 1992 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat has grown into an effective facilitator for the coordination of both natural and complex emergencies, and has increased its capacity to act as an advocate of humanitarian assistance in the context of both political and humanitarian policy discussions, and with respect to resource mobilization for humanitarian emergencies.

64. During the past year, the Department underwent an internal strategic planning exercise followed by an independent management study to identify both its core activities and its appropriate level of resources, and to assess its effectiveness. The management study confirmed that the Department is a dynamic, responsive and reflective institution but acknowledged that its ultimate success will depend largely on the support of Member States and other organizations within the United Nations system. The management study did identify a few areas for improvement, including greater emphasis on policy and evaluation, improved collection, analysis and dissemination of information, better administrative procedures, and a need for staff development and training programmes. Since then the Department has taken a number of actions to address identified problems, including administrative and departmental adjustments to bring about greater synergy between the work of the New York and Geneva offices, and greater utilization of common services for both complex emergencies and natural disasters.

65. It was recognized in the 1995 report to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly that the limited regular budget funding available to the Department posed significant constraints on its capacity to coordinate an accelerated incidence of complex emergencies. On the basis of the internal and external reviews and studies referred to above, a financial strategy for addressing the Department's extrabudgetary requirements has been established. With appropriate donor support, this strategy could place the Department on a sound financial footing and ensure predictable resources to carry out its work in the longer term.

A. Coordination tools

66. By its resolution 46/182, the General Assembly created the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator, and a number of tools for use by that official in fulfilling the coordination mandate, such as the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the consolidated inter-agency appeal process. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs continues to hone these tools to ensure their effectiveness and their appropriateness in a time of changing demands and operational realities. The Department has also developed a number of additional tools, instruments evolved to meet new needs and new environments, such as an information-sharing system on the Internet, and the use of military and civilian assets.

1. Central Emergency Revolving Fund

67. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund continues to serve as one of the main sources of funding for United Nations agencies in need of a timely response to emergencies. During 1995, the Fund was utilized to supplement the agencies' own funding for emergencies in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda and the Great Lakes region. Details of advances made to and reimbursements received from operational agencies as well as the status of the Fund are given in the annex. While the Fund's usefulness is well acknowledged, certain concerns and constraints remain to be addressed in order to ensure its continued effectiveness.

68. As reported to the Council and the General Assembly in 1995, the Fund has been utilized, on a limited number of occasions, for protracted emergencies in order to avert critical interruption or scaling down of much-needed humanitarian relief activities. Since the Fund was established primarily to ensure a timely response in the initial phase of an emergency, the Council may wish to review this matter and formally authorize, in compelling circumstances, the use of the Fund to fulfil the critical humanitarian requirements of protracted emergencies.

69. One other concern is the need for timely replenishment of the Fund. Delayed reimbursements have had a serious impact on the Fund's ability to meet requirements in emergency situations. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has taken steps to reinforce existing procedures, including shortening the period for reimbursement or encouraging partial repayment wherever feasible and drawing late reimbursements to the attention of donors in consolidated appeals. The Department has also invoked the relevant provisions of the guidelines governing the Fund's operation related to the recovery of delayed reimbursements.

70. Despite these initiatives, however, a number of advances have remained outstanding for more than one to two years owing to weak responses to certain appeals. This matter has been drawn to the attention of the Council and the General Assembly. One of the affected agencies has noted that, as a result of its inability to reimburse, it will not be borrowing from the Fund in the future, except when it has secured pledges; this weakens the concept of the borrowing facility. The only remaining alternative for recovery of these advances would be to seek specific donor contributions to cover the outstanding advances so that the Fund's level of resources can be maintained at the minimum of $50 million stipulated in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

71. In the context of its review of the humanitarian capacity of the United Nations as set out in its resolution 1995/56, the Economic and Social Council may also wish to address the overall issue of strengthening the Fund, expanding its scope and broadening its resource base so as to make it an even more effective instrument for emergency response.

2. Early warning

72. Recognizing that prevention and preparedness is the most effective way to reduce conflict-induced human suffering, work has continued on developing an early-warning system within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The purpose

of the Humanitarian Early Warning System is to compile and analyse information from several varied sources so as to identify potential crises that may have humanitarian implications. The System draws upon the various early-warning mechanisms of other United Nations and non-United Nations organizations, and by collaborating with non-governmental organizations as sources of information and partners in assessing situations. With the information provided by the System, the Department is able to focus attention on situations of concern in discussions with humanitarian partners, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and with other departments of the United Nations Secretariat, in particular the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, through the "framework for coordination".

73. The next step in strengthening the Humanitarian Early Warning System is the development of a strong, effective and regular channel of communication with field offices and regional information systems such as the Department's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), maintained at Nairobi, as well as with regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, which itself has recently established an early-warning system for conflict situations in Africa.

3. ReliefWeb

74. When a crisis occurs, information disjunctures and information overload can be major obstacles in the effective coordination of international humanitarian assistance. Recognizing the need for better information management, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in cooperation with interested Governments and United Nations and non-governmental organizations, has established an interconnected, global information network known as "ReliefWeb".

75. The information on ReliefWeb, in the form of situation reports, appeals, evaluations, news reports, maps, financial tracking and country information from the Humanitarian Early Warning System, is produced by the international humanitarian community and maintained by the Department. ReliefWeb consolidates and organizes this information on emergencies and disasters, and ensures that it is current, easily retrievable, and readily accessible on the Internet. Where the Internet is not available, information from ReliefWeb can be disseminated using e-mail or CD-ROM.

4. Use of military and civil defence assets

76. Military and civil defence assets, used in the past with some regularity in response to natural disasters, have now been recognized as having a useful potential role in response to complex crises as well, particularly in the case of sudden-onset emergencies. In accordance with a decision taken by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs established the Military and Civil Defence Unit, which reports to an Advisory Panel established by the Standing Committee. The Unit aims to facilitate timely, sufficient and cost-effective support by military and civil defence assets to concerned humanitarian agencies when requested. It will act as a

focal point for Governments, regional organizations and military and civil defence institutions interested in planning and, when requested, providing support to agencies engaged in humanitarian operations. The Unit will support the establishment of preparedness and response measures, the development of planning tools (databases, manuals), the definition of a legal framework for the use of military and civil defence assets, and the preparation and implementation of training exercises.

77. Prior to the establishment of the Military and Civil Defence Unit, the Department's Military and Civil Defence Assets project finalized, with the cooperation of representatives of 30 countries, a Military and Civil Defence Assets Field Manual which defines pre-planning and crisis management options. In addition, a reference document for coordination of humanitarian air operations was prepared by a Military and Civil Defence Assets working group, and the first set of Military and Civil Defence Assets training modules was finalized. The products of these activities have been taken up by the Governments participating in the Partnership for Peace programme, and applied in emergencies such as those in Cape Verde, Rwanda and Ukraine. The Military and Civil Defence Assets project and the Military and Civil Defence Unit will be merged into a single unit.

B. Response to complex emergencies

78. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to develop its capacity to respond to ongoing and incipient complex emergencies. As well as developing ongoing training programmes including the complex emergency training initiative mentioned above, this has been achieved inter alia through the inter-agency consolidated appeals and related processes, and the consolidation of headquarters and field structures.

79. The consolidated inter-agency appeals process remains a central tool in coordinating the response of humanitarian partners to complex emergencies. Since September 1995, some US$ 2.5 billion has been requested in 12 appeals, and a total of $795 million has been pledged to date or carried over. Some 25 million people have been targeted to receive assistance through the appeals covering Afghanistan, Angola, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and the former Yugoslavia, and the Caucasus region, the Chechnya region of the Russian Federation and the Great Lakes region. In addition, the importance of flash appeals has yet again been confirmed in 1996, as illustrated by the flash appeal for internally displaced persons made on 19 April 1996 as a result of the emergency in Lebanon, the response to which was well in excess of the funding requirements.

80. The response of the Department to complex emergencies has also been strengthened by the continued rapid deployment of departmental missions, often with the active participation of other United Nations bodies. These missions have been fundamental, first, in drawing the attention of the international community to the plight of affected populations and, secondly, in assessing the needs of vulnerable groups for the subsequent planning, elaboration and implementation of humanitarian programmes. In each case, the subsequent evaluation has been linked to the process of defining the most appropriate

strategy for resource mobilization, be it through detailed situation reports, flash appeals or consolidated inter-agency appeals.

81. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has also continued a process of mid-term review of a number of humanitarian programmes, whereby the achievements and constraints of ongoing programmes have been identified and reviewed. This tool has been valuable to all humanitarian partners, and has contributed to improving the response of the Department to ongoing and incipient complex emergencies.

82. In the context of ongoing complex emergencies, 14 field structures are currently staffed by the Department in Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan, and the Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), the Chechnya region of the Russian Federation and the Great Lakes region (Burundi, Rwanda and the IRIN office at Nairobi). In addition, an office of the Department was deployed to Sarajevo, to support the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Department's Field Coordination Unit in Tajikistan was closed at the end of 1995, as that country moved towards continued rehabilitation and restructuring.

83. The Department's Field Coordination Units provide support for the coordination functions performed by the humanitarian coordinator in the field, including promotion of sectoral coordination and implementation of humanitarian strategies which are agreed upon by all humanitarian agencies in the country. The fundamental role of the units is performed through information sharing, defining common strategies to address ongoing humanitarian requirements, promoting joint needs assessments, assisting agencies in identifying specific roles, and avoiding overlap and duplication.

C. Natural disasters and environmental emergencies

84. A critical component of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/182 by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is work related to the reduction and mitigation of, and the response to, natural disasters and environmental emergencies. Such disasters continue to cause great suffering and vast material loss throughout the world, especially in developing countries.

1. Reduction and mitigation activities

85. During the reporting period, the Department has continued its efforts towards integrated and concerted approaches in the field of natural disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation. These efforts have been undertaken on the basis of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction of May 1994. The work of the Department includes technical cooperation in support of concrete application of natural disaster reduction at the country level.

86. The secretariat for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction has continued to support and coordinate the implementation of the Decade's

targets and its overall objective of reducing, through concerted international action, the loss of life, material destruction, and social and economic disruption which occur as a consequence of natural disasters. Particular consideration and support is extended to the needs of the most vulnerable communities, mostly in the developing world. Major challenges in implementing the goals of the Decade relate to the creation of constructive linkages between natural disaster reduction, natural resource protection, environmental management, and the achievement of sustainable development. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly, a detailed report on the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade is being submitted in 1996 under the item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".

87. The broad strategy for pre-disaster activities has been established through consultation with country authorities and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. However, a continuing problem is the lack of sustained commitment and systematic attention to risk reduction. Each new catastrophe typically triggers closer attention to mitigation measures, at least for the disaster type in question, but such attention is often localized and short-lived and, as a result, the global socio-economic impact of disasters, measured in terms of the number of people affected by disaster, has continued to increase by about 6 per cent per year.

88. The only way to stop this increase, and its dramatic impact on sustainable development and environmental degradation, is to initiate long-term mitigation programmes. It is also increasingly recognized by disaster-prone country authorities and by many donors that a larger proportion of international assistance should be focused on addressing the root causes of disaster, through suitably adapted prevention and preparedness programmes which maximize the mobilization of national and especially local community resources, drawing upon the skills and expertise of all relevant regional and international agencies.

89. Over the past year, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in close coordination with other United Nations bodies, has provided assistance to help countries to properly assess their full spectrum of risks, to prescribe, on the basis of global experience, the most cost-effective disaster reduction measures, to coordinate external guidance where needed on how to apply those measures in the most vulnerable areas, and to stimulate wider involvement and closer cooperation among the numerous international agencies with relevant technical and managerial expertise. A wide range of integrated and systematic disaster reduction programmes are being carried out in some of the disaster-prone developing countries.

2. Natural disaster and environmental emergency response

90. In 1995, the Department provided assistance to 55 Member States to support their efforts to cope with the impact of 82 sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental emergencies. The Department's emergency response system assisted in on-site assessment, coordination at the local, national and international levels, and resource mobilization. In 28 cases, disaster-affected countries requested the Department to launch appeals for international assistance on their behalf, and the international community made $103 million worth of contributions

in cash, kind and services. In response to these appeals $7 million were channelled through the Department to address the most pressing needs of disaster victims.

91. In addition to facilitating mobilization and coordination of international relief to assist affected countries to cope with the aftermath of disasters, the Department continued its activities in substantive areas of capacity-building for improved international, regional and national disaster preparedness.

92. Cooperation in the procurement, storage and delivery of relief items on a cost-sharing basis and, in particular, the joint operation of emergency stockpiles was fostered further. The implementation of memoranda of understanding on the cooperative use of the Pisa warehouse with WHO and WFP commenced in 1995 and increased the speed and capacity of the Pisa warehouse response to emergencies. During the last three years, in cooperation with 15 partners, over 2,700 tons of relief goods, valued at approximately $11.5 million, were delivered to some 57 destinations.

93. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, through the participation of 18 Member States, continued to contribute to greater transparency and effectiveness in the Department's assessment and coordination activities in the context of sudden-onset disasters. To further develop its capacity to respond to coordination requirements, the Department in 1995 organized two training courses and a refresher training course in disaster assessment and coordination.

94. The training was based on the material and the wider emergency management framework established by the joint Department of Humanitarian Affairs/UNDP disaster management training programme. That programme is engaged in developing and implementing training and other staff development activities for the capacitation of Department of Humanitarian Affairs staff and representatives in the area of field coordination of emergency response. As the training addressed the full range of emergency situations included in the Department's mandate, it represents a practical contribution of the Department to the newly established inter-agency complex emergency training initiative.

95. The joint UNEP/Department of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit assisted many countries in responding to a variety of environmental emergencies by acting as a broker between affected and donating countries, and as a clearing-house and switchboard for disaster notification and alert. Similarly, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group continued to promote and strengthen a network of contacts between providers of resources and the Department.

96. The Department regularly convenes the Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications. 11/ The definition of a coordination mechanism for the field telecommunication networks used by United Nations agencies and other partners during emergencies will be implemented in the summer of 1996. At the same time, a consolidated approach towards a reduction of communications fees will be adopted, which is expected to result in considerable savings. The preparation of a draft international convention for the facilitation of emergency telecommunications for humanitarian aid will be reviewed, starting in May 1996.

97. A model agreement between the United Nations and the Government of a Member State, concerning measures to expedite the import, export and transit of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters, was prepared in cooperation with the secretariat of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and in consultation with interested United Nations agencies, relief organizations and national customs authorities. The final text of the Model Agreement was submitted for approval to WCO in March 1996.

3. Sasakawa/Department of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Prevention Award

98. In 1986, as part of a series of measures designed to give more publicity to the disaster prevention activities which have always been part of the mandate of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and its predecessor, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, an annual disaster prevention award was created with financial support from the Sasakawa Foundation. This was one of several similar prizes established to promote some of the essential but less widely known activities of different international organizations. The Award has been given annually from 1987 to 1994, and has considerably stimulated the applicants (typically between 15 and 20 each year) to take stock of the extent to which they have oriented their skills and activities to meet practical needs in the more disaster-prone developing countries.

99. Because of increasing administrative costs and decreasing revenue as a result of global interest rate reductions, it has become necessary to seek additional capital as a basis for the annual Award. In response to the Department's request, the Sasakawa Foundation has indicated its readiness to double its original contribution, thereby providing a new total of $2 million.

100. The original agreement and statutes have been revised and expanded to include, in particular, clarification of the purpose of the Award and the criteria for application and for selection of each year's recipient, and rules concerning membership of the jury and the procedure by which it selects the winning applicant. The new agreement has been developed after consultation between the Sasakawa Foundation and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and has been reviewed by the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat and modified in line with advice received.

101. The General Assembly is invited to take note of these arrangements and endorse the continuation of the Award.

D. Mine clearance and related activities

102. In response to the international landmine crisis, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to exercise its role as the focal point for United Nations mine activities by providing funding, coordination, programme oversight and development of new initiatives, to answer the urgent mine-related humanitarian needs that have emerged worldwide. A comprehensive report on United Nations assistance in mine clearance will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

103. The United Nations addresses the existing landmine tragedy by actively supporting seven mine-clearance programmes. Over the last year, the United Nations Secretariat has been responsible for programmes in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Eastern Slavonia, Mozambique and Rwanda, with continuing input into the programmes in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In 1995, a one-year programme was completed in Yemen. The United Nations approach to mine-clearance programmes has been, in addition to immediate operational needs, to focus on the creation of indigenous capacities.

104. In fulfilment of its role as a primary advocate for mine victims worldwide, the Department has actively participated in international conferences and continued to work cooperatively with the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations to further the visibility of the landmine issue within the international community. As part of a mine-awareness campaign to further promote the ban on landmines with the general public as well as Governments, the Department has presented a multi-media exhibition on the landmine situation at United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and New York. In addition, in late 1995, the Department published the first issue of a quarterly newsletter entitled Landmines to provide information on mine-related activities. The Department, with the support of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, continues to develop the United Nations Central Landmine Database, which is available on the Internet, so as to ensure the widest dissemination of information collected on mine fields and mine incidents.

V. CONCLUSIONS

105. Humanitarian action is at a crossroads. The escalation of conflicts and displacement has caused a quantum leap in the need for response by the international community. The qualitative changes, in particular the implications of working in volatile and insecure environments, have been a major factor defining how humanitarian organizations conceive of their role and operate on the ground. With these changes has come the realization that complex crises are not aberrations in a linear process of development but have deep roots in or are amplified by the ways in which societies are structured, issues of legitimacy and governance are addressed, and individuals and groups are affected by poverty and disparity. Moreover, the contexts in which humanitarian assistance is provided are often political, and all too frequently constitute the only effective response of the international community when the political will or the resources are lacking to tackle the root causes of crises.

106. The humanitarian enterprise is costly. The humanitarian imperative cannot be denied: the survival needs of individuals and groups affected by emergency and disaster must be addressed. In a world situation characterized by increasing needs and shrinking resources for international assistance, the aid community is faced with difficult choices between silent and high-profile emergencies and between immediate relief and long-term reconstruction and development. Furthermore, while there is general agreement that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, the hard reality of the international system is that minimal resources are available to address the conditions leading to a disaster and long-term solutions.

107. The direction of the enterprise is still in flux. Because of the changing context, new actors, such as the military, have appeared on the humanitarian scene and new types of tasks, such as mine clearance, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers, have to be undertaken. The compartmentalization which typified approaches in the past is giving way to new synergies: key concepts such as "relief", "rehabilitation", "reconstruction" and "development" need continuously to be redefined. In many complex emergencies such distinctions are unhelpful: they tend to overlap and blur the fact that, in protracted crises or low-intensity conflicts, very often it is possible to address both the relief and rehabilitation and, in some instances, development needs at the same time. Indeed, it is now recognized that this is the best way forward: a key to success is to plant development seeds while addressing humanitarian needs.

108. Reform is on the agenda. The process initiated by the Economic and Social Council in 1995 aims to assess and improve the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to crises. Recent studies undertaken by Member States, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have called for the review of the current institutional arrangements for the delivery and the coordination of humanitarian assistance. The concerned United Nations organizations, as well as their governmental and non-governmental counterparts, are engaged in a dialogue aimed at identifying strains and imbalances in the system, and the corresponding corrections. The approach is essentially incremental and builds on existing capacities.

109. The response capacity of the system is improving. In the four years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, considerable experience has been gained in addressing the complex crises of a less predictable world. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund have been significant innovations. Memoranda of understanding and other technical instruments have clarified mandates and improved the interface between a growing number of actors. Several areas of weakness however remain and should be addressed.

110. The first is the area of prevention, preparedness and contingency planning, which is crucial for a timely and effective response to both natural and man-made disasters. Efforts are under way to strengthen United Nations agency guidelines for needs and capacity assessment, as well as for contingency planning. The fact is, however, that resources are more readily available for emergency cure than for prevention. With every major crisis comes the sad recognition that there is no common understanding of what constitutes an acceptable level of contingency planning and of the funds required to attain such a level.

111. The second relates to the ambiguities of the very concept of coordination. There is widespread agreement that coordination is a must, but perceptions may often vary of what it implies in practice, and how it can best be translated into specific coordination mechanisms at the field level. Hence the need to refine the understanding of the system and the international community as a whole of the advantages and disadvantages of specific coordination arrangements.

112. The third pertains to the availability of the necessary resources for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to carry out its mandated activities. The United Nations is appreciative of the continued support by the donor community directed towards meeting the humanitarian needs in both natural disasters and complex crises. A dialogue has been initiated with Member States, in particular donors, and various more durable approaches have been explored. There is clearly a need to address the vulnerability of the Department resulting from the imbalance between its regular and extrabudgetary resources.

113. The fourth area is accountability which is less than optimal. The proliferation of actors providing assistance in complex emergencies, and the fact that, given the magnitude and diversity of crises, even the most established organizations are greatly over-stretched, have made the task of monitoring, performance assessment and evaluation particularly difficult, but all the more essential. The need for codes of conduct, performance indicators and appropriate mechanisms to assess impact is widely recognized. Initial steps have been taken both within and outside the United Nations system to introduce such mechanisms. Long-term support from Member States, particularly the donor community, is contingent on the humanitarian system's capacity to demonstrate that the funds entrusted to it are spent in a diligent and cost-effective manner. This is however a long-term task requiring dedicated resources for "lessons learned" studies and evaluations. More also needs to be done to equip humanitarian organizations with the means to assess the impact of their activities on the coping mechanisms of the affected communities and to ensure that such activities are sustainable and do not erode self-reliance capabilities.

114. Ultimately, the international community's capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters will depend on how well each part of the system works and how each part, within and outside the United Nations system, works with the other elements. As stated in section III above, the sum must be more than its parts, or the system will never attain the capacity to respond as effectively, efficiently or rapidly as is optimal. This was the rationale behind the process initiated by the Economic and Social Council at its 1995 session. This process is now well under way: the governing bodies of the concerned United Nations organizations and their secretariats, both individually and collectively, have been reviewing the issues raised in the Council resolution. The Council's call for a comprehensive and analytical report, including options, proposals and recommendations for a review and strengthening of all aspects of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance provides a timely opportunity to address some of the most critical issues affecting humanitarian assistance.

115. The humanitarian community is composed of thousands of often young relief workers who have chosen to serve in the remotest and most perilous parts of the world. Whether they work for established United Nations organizations, Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies or international and national non-governmental organizations, with few exceptions, they carry out their duties with competence, dedication to humanitarian values, and a sense of mission. These women and men give their best for the victims of conflict and disaster. They are the greatest asset of the humanitarian community. Their courage in the face of hardship and danger must be acknowledged here. The memory of those who have fallen in the

line of duty, a growing and unacceptable roll-call each year, must not be forgotten.

Notes

1/ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 1995 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 16.

2/ See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, The Least Developed Countries, 1996 Report (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.D.3), Overview.

3/ Ibid.

4/ World Bank, World Debt Tables 1994-1995.

5/ Ky Amoako and James Gustave Speth, "In Africa, unattended poverty leads to conflict", International Herald Tribune, 21 March 1996.

6/ See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, The Least Developed Countries, 1996 Report (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.D.3), Overview.

7/ Projections indicate that nearly 50 per cent of the world's population will live in urban environments by the year 2000. United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 1995 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 185.

8/ Seven least developed countries, the least able to bear the burden, currently host over 250,000 refugees. See Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solutions (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 251.

9/ "The world economy at the beginning of 1996: Note by the Secretary-General" (E/1996/INF/1), para. 25.

10/ See World Food Programme, Tackling Hunger in a World Full of Food: Tasks Ahead for Food Aid (Rome, 1996).

11/ The Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications was formed in order to implement resolution 7 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 1994) and resolution 36 of the Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (Kyoto, 1994).

ANNEX

Central Emergency Revolving Fund

A. Consolidated advances and reimbursements

(As at 31 March 1996)

(United States dollars)

Operational organization	Project	Amount advanced	Amount reimbursed	Amount outstanding	Date of advance	Date of reimbursement
UNICEF	Kenya	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	24 Aug. 1992	31 Dec. 1992 and 22 Oct. 1993
UNICEF	Somalia	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	24 Aug. 1992	22 Dec. 1992
UNCHS	Somalia	500 000	500 000	0	10 Sept. 1992	29 Jan. 1993
FAO	Somalia	1 600 000	1 600 000	0	30 Sept. 1992	24 June 1993
WHO	Somalia	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	26 Oct. 1992	29 March 1993
UNICEF	Iraq	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	11 Nov. 1992	15 April 1993
UNHCR	Afghanistan	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	24 Nov. 1992	6 Jan. 1993
UNICEF	Mozambique	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	22 Jan. 1993	2 Feb. 1994 and 1 Aug. 1994
WFP	Tajikistan	4 500 000	2 036 121	2 463 879	25 March 1993	3 May 1994 and 10 June 1994
WHO	Yugoslavia	2 500 000	2 500 000	0	26 March 1993	5 May 1994
UNHCR	Georgia	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	22 April 1993	16 Sept. 1993
UNICEF	Iraq	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	14 June 1993	21 Oct. 1993
UNHCR	Tajikistan	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	18 June 1993	29 Dec. 1993 and 18 May 1994
WFP	Iraq	4 000 000	4 000 000	0	21 June 1993	3 May 1994 and 9 Aug. 1994
UNICEF	Haiti	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	23 July 1993	25 April 1994 and 1 Aug. 1994
WFP	Lebanon	560 000	560 000	0	3 Sept. 1993	3 Jan. 1994 (FAO)
UNCHS	Lebanon	5 000 000	1 693 276	3 306 724	9 Sept. 1993	21 March 1994 and 17 June 1994
UNICEF	Iraq	7 000 000	7 000 000	0	27 Oct. 1993	1 Feb. 1994
UNHCR	Burundi	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	19 Nov. 1993	1 June 1994
WFP	Burundi	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	22 Dec. 1993	3 May 1994
UNICEF	Angola	1 500 000	1 500 000	0	6 Jan. 1994	19 May 1994
IOM	Zaire	1 000 000	649 846	350 154	6 Jan. 1994	8 July 1994
UNICEF	Sudan	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	17 Feb. 1994	20 June 1994
FAO	Sudan	200 000	200 000	0	23 Feb. 1994	16 May 1994
UNICEF	Yugoslavia	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	16 March 1994	31 Aug. 1994
UNDP	Kenya	500 000	500 000	0	18 March 1994	13 April 1995
WHO	Yugoslavia	2 500 000	2 500 000	0	29 March 1994	31 Oct. 1994
UNICEF	Somalia	4 870 000	4 870 000	0	28 April 1994	22 July 1994 and 24 Oct. 1994

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Operational organization	Project	Amount advanced	Amount reimbursed	Amount outstanding	Date of advance	Date of reimbursement
UNREO	Rwanda	200 000	200 000	0	28 April 1994	8 Sept. 1994
UNHCR	Tajikistan	3 000 000	3 000 000	0	20 May 1994	21 Dec. 1994
UNHCR	Rwanda	10 000 000	10 000 000	0	1 June 1994	29 Sept. 1994 and 21 Nov. 1994
UNICEF	Rwanda	3 000 000	3 000 000	0	21 July 1994	30 Dec. 1994
WFP	Rwanda	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	22 July 1994	17 Nov. 1994
HCHR/HR	Rwanda	3 000 000		3 000 000	7 Oct. 1994	
UNICEF	Sudan	3 000 000	3 000 000	0	28 Dec. 1994	24 May 1995 and 22 Nov. 1995
UNICEF	Northern Iraq	930 000	930 000	0	4 Jan. 1995	26 April 1995
UCAH	Angola	480 600	480 600	0	26 Jan. 1995	28 June 1995 and 15 Sept. 1995
WFP	Rwanda	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	7 March 1995	14 July 1995
DHA/UNREO	Rwanda	100 000	100 000	0	13 July 1995	14 March 1996
DHA/UNREO	Rwanda	100 000	100 000	0	1 Aug. 1995	14 March 1996
DHA/SRSG	Burundi	110 000	110 000	0	1 Sept. 1995	11 Jan. 1996
DHA/IRIN	Great Lakes	200 000	100 000	100 000	2 Oct. 1995	29 Jan. 1996
UNAMIR	Rwanda	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	2 Oct. 1995	15 March 1996
DHA	West Africa	1 763 660	157 122	1 606 538	8 Dec. 1995	16 Jan. 1996
Total		120 114 260	109 286 965	10 827 295		

B. Status of utilization of the Fund

Contributions received:	49 227 104
Less: Advances	(120 114 260)
Add: Reimbursements	109 286 965
Add: Interest earned (as at 31 March 1996)	4 567 328
Fund balance as at 31 March 1996	42 967 137